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FAIRY TALES

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The Ice Maiden

FAIRY TALES of Hans Andersen

With Illustrations
by
Helen Stratton.



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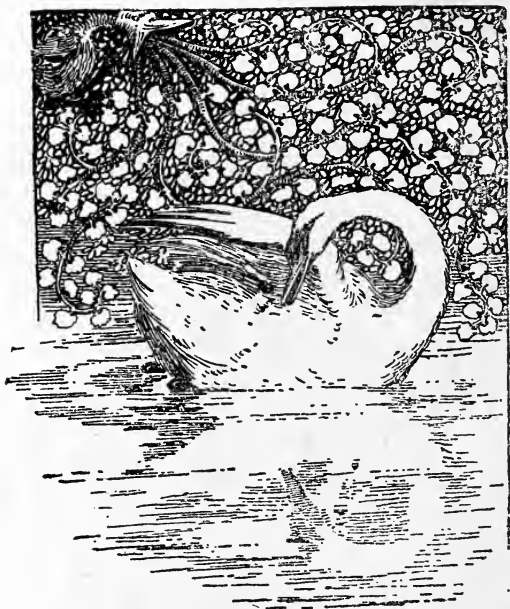
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The Red Shoes

HERE was once a little girl who was delicately pretty, but who was obliged to walk about with bare feet in summer (for she was poor), and to wear coarse wooden shoes in winter, so that her little insteps were red all over.

In the village lived an old shoemaker's wife, who fashioned a little pair of shoes as well as she could out of some old strips of red cloth ; they were rather clumsy, but the intention was kind, for they were to give to the little girl, whose name was Karen.

She received the red shoes, and put them on, for the first time, on the very day her mother was buried. They were not fit for mourning, it is true, but having no others, she put them on to her bare feet, and followed the pauper's coffin to its last resting-place.

There happened to pass by a large, old-fashioned carriage, in which sat an old lady, who took compassion on the little girl, and said to the preacher : " Pray, give me that little girl, and I will adopt her."

And Karen fancied that all this was owing to



the red shoes ; but the old lady thought them abominable, and ordered them to be burnt. Karen then was dressed in clean and tidy clothes, and was taught to read and to sew, and people said she was pretty. But the looking-glass said : " You are more than pretty—you are beautiful ! "

The queen once travelled through the land, with her little daughter, who was a princess. And crowds flocked towards the palace, and Karen stood amongst the rest, to

" The Princess stood at a window."

see the little princess, who stood at a window, dressed in the finest white clothes. She had neither a train, nor a golden crown, but beautiful red morocco shoes—which, it must be confessed, were a trifle prettier than those the shoemaker's wife had patched together for little Karen. Surely nothing in the world can be compared to red shoes !

Karen was now old enough to be confirmed. She had new clothes given her, and she was to have a pair of new shoes likewise. The rich shoemaker of the town took the measure of her little foot in his own house, in a room where a number of glass cases were filled with elegant shoes and shining boots. It was a very pretty sight ; but as the old lady could not see very well, she took no pleasure in it. Amongst the shoes was a pair of red ones, just like those the princess wore. How pretty they were, to be sure ! The shoemaker said they had been made for a count's child, but had not fitted well.

"Are they of polished leather ?" asked the old lady, "for they shine so."

"They shine, indeed," said Karen ; and they fitted her and were purchased. But the old lady did not know they were red, or she would never have allowed Karen to go to be confirmed in red shoes, which she, however, now did.

Everybody looked at her feet. And when she stepped across the church to reach the choir, she

fancied that even the old pictures over the graves, the portraits of preachers and their wives, with their stiff collars and long black clothes, were fixing their eyes on her red shoes. And she thought of nothing but them, even when the preacher laid his hand on her head, and descanted on the holy baptism that admitted her within the pale of God's servants, and reminded her that she must now behave like a grown Christian. And the organ pealed solemnly, while the children's voices joined with those of the choristers ; but Karen thought of nothing but her red shoes.

In the afternoon, the old lady heard everybody say that the shoes were red ; and she said it was quite shocking, and highly improper, and that in future Karen must always go to church in black shoes, even though they should be somewhat worn.

Next Sunday she was to receive the sacrament ; and Karen looked first at the black shoes and then at the red ones, and then looked again, and finished by putting on the red ones.

The sun shone brightly. Karen and the old lady went by the footway across the cornfield, which was rather dusty. Near the church door stood an old invalid soldier, with a crutch-stick, and a singularly long beard, that was red rather than white, for he had red hair. And he stooped to the ground, and asked the old lady if he might wipe her shoes. And Karen likewise put out her little foot. " See, what smart dancing pumps ! "

said the soldier ; “ they will stick on firmly when you dance ” ; and thereupon, he slapped the soles with his hand.

The old lady gave the invalid soldier some alms, and entered the church with Karen.

And everybody inside looked at Karen’s red shoes, and all the pictures looked at them ; and when Karen knelt before the altar, and put the gold cup to her lips, she thought only of her red shoes : and it seemed to her as though they were swimming in the communion cup ; and she forgot to sing her psalm, and forgot to say the Lord’s prayer.

The congregation now left the church, and the old lady got into her carriage. As Karen raised her foot to step in after her, the old



“ She thought only of her shoes.”

soldier said : " See, what smart dancing pumps ! " And Karen could not help making a few dancing steps, and having once begun, her feet went on dancing. It was just as if the shoes had some power over her. She danced round the church corner, and could not stop herself, and the



"She could not stop herself."

coachman was obliged to run after her and catch hold of her, and lift her into the carriage ; but her feet went on dancing, so that she trod upon the good old lady's toes at a great rate. At last the shoes were taken off her feet, which then obtained rest.

The shoes were put by into a closet at home, but Karen could not cease looking at them.

The old lady now fell ill, and it was said she could not live. She had to be nursed and waited on, and it was nobody's business to attend her so much as Karen's ; but there happened to be a great ball in the town, to which Karen was invited, and she gazed at the old lady, who was not likely to recover, and then looked at her red shoes, and thought there could not be any very great sin in putting them on—and so far there was not—but she next went to the ball, and began to dance : only, when she wanted to go to the right the shoes would dance to the left : and when she wanted to go up the room, the shoes persisted in going down the room ; and then down the steps into the street, and out through the town gate. And she danced on, in spite of herself, right into the gloomy forest.

Something was gleaming through the tops of the trees, and she thought it was the moon—for it was a face—but it was the old soldier with his red beard, who sat and nodded, saying : “ See, what pretty dancing pumps ! ”

She was now frightened, and tried to fling off the red shoes, but they clung fast ; and she tore off her stockings. But the shoes had, as it were, grown to her feet, and dance she must, across fields and meadows—in rain or in sunshine—by

day and by night—only by night it was far more dreadful still.

She danced up to the open churchyard, where the dead did not dance, having something much better to do. She would fain have sat down on some pauper's grave, where grows the bitter fern ; but there was no rest for her. And as she danced



"She went across the heath."

towards the open church door, she saw an angel, in long white clothes, and with wings that reached from his shoulders down to the earth. His countenance was stern and grave, and his hand grasped a broad and shining sword.

"Thou shalt dance!" said he, "dance in thy red shoes, until thou art pale and cold, and till thy skin has shrivelled up to a skeleton. Thou shalt dance from door to door; and thou shalt knock at the doors where live proud and haughty children, that they may hear thee, and take warning! Thou shalt dance—yea, dance——"

"Mercy!" cried Karen. But she heard not what the angel answered, for the shoes carried her from the door into the field, away—away—still dancing on and on.

One morning she danced past a well-known door; she heard the sounds of a dirge from within, and a coffin, decked with flowers, was brought forth: and she now knew that her old patroness was dead, and she felt as though she were abandoned by every one, and cursed by God's angel.

On she danced, for dance she must—aye, dance through the gloomy night. The shoes carried her through brambles and stumps of trees, which scratched her till she bled. And she danced across the heath, to a little lonely house, where she knew the executioner lived; and she tapped at the windows with her fingers, saying:

"Come out—come out. I cannot come in, for I am obliged to dance."

And the executioner said:

"Do you not know who I am? It is I who strike off wicked men's heads, and I perceive that my axe now clinks."

"Do not strike off my head," said Karen, "for then I shall not be able to repent of my sins. But strike my feet off, that I may get rid of my red shoes."

And she then confessed her sins, and the exe-



"All the children made much of her."

cutioner struck off her red shoes only, though it gave her as sharp a pang as if her toes had come off with them. And away the shoes danced, across the fields, and into the depths of the forest.

He then gave her crutches, for she felt unable to walk, and taught her the psalm that penitents sing, and she kissed the hand that had directed the axe, and went away across the heath.

"I have now suffered enough for the red shoes," said she ; "so now I will go to church, that people may see me." And she hobbled up to the church door, but had no sooner reached it, than the red shoes danced before her, and frightened her back.

She was in deep affliction that whole week, and shed many bitter tears ; but when Sunday came round again, she said : "I have now suffered and struggled enough ! I believe I am quite as good as many of those who are sitting at church, and bridling up." And she sallied boldly forth, but she reached no farther than the churchyard gate ; for she saw the red shoes dancing before her, and was so frightened that she turned back, and heartily repented of her sins.

She then went to the parsonage, and begged, as a favour, to be taken into the family's service, promising to be diligent, and to do everything she could. She did not care about wages ; all she wanted was to have a roof over her head, and to be with good people. The preacher's wife felt compassion for her, and took her into her service ; and she proved very industrious and very thoughtful. She sat and listened with deep attention when the preacher read the Bible aloud in the evening. All the children made much of her ; but when they

spoke of dress, or finery, or beauty, she would then shake her head.

On the following Sunday they all went to church, and they asked her if she would accompany them ; but she looked at her crutches with tearful eyes. And so the others went forth to listen to the Word of God, while she repaired alone to her little chamber, that was only just large enough to contain a bed and a chair. And here she sat down with her psalm-book in her hand ; and as she read its pages, in a pious frame of mind, the wind wafted to her the sounds of the organ from the church, and she raised her tearful countenance, saying : " O Lord, do Thou succour me ! "

Then the sun shone brightly, and before her stood God's angel, in white clothes, such as she had seen him that night near the church door ; only he no longer bore the sharp sword in his hand, but held a beautiful green branch, all full of roses ; and he touched the ceiling with it, and the ceiling forthwith became lofty ; and at the spot where he had touched it shone a golden star. And he touched the walls, and they widened ; and she could see the organ that was being played upon. She saw, too, the old pictures of the preachers and their wives, and the congregation sitting on their neat chairs, and singing out of their psalm-books. For the church itself had come to the poor girl in her small chamber, or she had come to it. She sat on a chair, amongst the rest of

the preacher's servants, and when they had finished the psalm, and looked up, they nodded, and said: "That was right of you to come, Karen."

"It is by the grace of God," said she.

And the organ pealed forth, and the chorus of children's voices sounded most sweet and love-



"Her soul was carried up to God."

ly ! The bright sunshine shed its warm rays through the window, over the pew where Karen sat ; and her heart was so overwhelmed with sunshine, peace, and joy, that it broke ; and her soul was carried up to God on a sunbeam, and in Heaven there was no one who asked about the red shoes.

The Chimney Sweep

THE SHEPHERDESS AND THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER



AVE you ever seen an old wooden cupboard, quite black with age, and ornamented with carved scrolls and foliage, and non-descript figures? Just such an one stood in a sitting-room; it was a

legacy left by the great-grandmother of the family—it was covered from top to bottom with carved roses and tulips. There were the oddest scrolls, out of which peeped little stags' heads with their antlers. But in the middle of the cupboard was

represented the full-length figure of a man ; it is true he was rather ridiculous to look at, and was grinning—for one could not call it laughing—and, moreover, he had goat's legs, little horns upon his head, and a long beard. The children always called him General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-Sergeant—there's a name for you! rather difficult to pronounce, certainly, nor are there many who obtain such a title—but to have had him carved was something indeed ! However, there he was. He was always looking at the table under the looking-glass, where stood a pretty little china shepherdess. Her shoes were gilt, and her dress was ornamented with a red rose, besides which she had a golden hat and a crook ; she was marvellously pretty to behold. Close by her side stood a little chimney-sweeper, as black as a coal, though likewise of china ; he was just as clean and as delicate as another, and as to his being a chimney-sweeper, it was only that he represented one ; the potter might just as well have made a prince out of him, for it would have been all one !

There he stood so elegantly with his ladder, and with a countenance as white and as rosy as a girl's—indeed, this was, properly speaking, a fault, for his face ought to have been rather black. He stood close to the shepherdess ; they had both been placed where they stood ; and having been so placed, they became betrothed to each other. They

were well matched, being both young people, made of the same china, and equally fragile.

Close to them sat another figure, three times their size. He was an old Chinese, who could nod his head. He also was made of china, and pretended to be the grandfather of the little shepherdess ; but this he could not prove. He maintained that he was entitled to control her, and, therefore, when General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-Sergeant asked for the little shepherdess's hand, he had nodded consent.

"You will obtain in him," said the old Chinese, "a husband whom I verily believe to be of mahogany. You will become the lady of General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-Sergeant ! and he has a whole cupboardful of plate, to say nothing of what may be hid in the spring-drawers and secret compartments."

"I don't choose to live in the dark cupboard," said the little shepherdess. "I have heard say that he has eleven china wives in it already."

"Then you can become the twelfth !" said the Chinese. "To-night, as soon as you hear a creaking in the old press, your wedding shall take place, as true as I'm a Chinese." And thereupon he nodded his head, and fell asleep.

But the little shepherdess cried, and looked at her sweetheart, the china chimney-sweeper.

"I entreat you," said she, "to go with me into the wide world, for we can't remain here."



"I entreat you to go with me into the wide world."

"I will do anything you please," said the little chimney-sweeper ; "let us set out immediately. I think I can maintain you with my profession."

"I wish we were but safe down from the table ! " said she. "I shall not be easy till we are out in the wide world."

And he comforted her, and showed her how she might set her little foot on the carved projections and gilt foliage of the feet of the table ; besides, he took his ladder to help, and so they managed to reach the floor. But when they looked towards the old cupboard, they saw it was all in an uproar. The carved stags poked out their heads, raised their antlers, and turned their necks. The General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-Sergeant was cutting tremendous capers, and bawling out to the Chinese : "They are running away ! they are running away ! "

The fugitives were somewhat frightened, and jumped into the drawer in the window-seat.

Here lay several packs of cards, that were not complete, and a little dolls' theatre, which had been built up as neatly as could be. A play was being represented, and all the queens, whether of hearts or diamonds, spades or clubs, sat in the front row, fanning themselves with their tulips ; and behind them stood all the knaves, and showed that they had heads both upwards and downwards as playing-cards have. The play was about two lovers, who were not allowed to marry ; and the

shepherdess cried, for it seemed just like her own story.

"I cannot bear it," said she; "I must leave the drawer." But when they had reached the floor, and looked up at the table, there was the old Chinese awake, and shaking himself—and down he came on the floor like a lump.

"The old Chinese is coming!" shrieked the little shepherdess, falling on her china knee, for she was much affected.

"I have thought of a plan," said the chimney-sweeper. "Suppose we creep into the jar of perfumes that stands in the corner. There we might lie upon roses and lavender, and throw salt into his eyes if he comes near us."

"That would be of no use," said she. "Besides, I know that the old Chinese and the jar were formerly betrothed, and there always remains a



"She fell on her china knee."

degree of good-will when one has been on such terms. No! we have nothing for it but to go out into the wide world!"

"Have you really the courage to go out into the wide world with me?" asked the chimney-sweeper. "Have you reflected how large it is, and that we can never come back hither?"

"I have," said she.

And the chimney-sweeper looked hard at her, and said: "My way lies through the chimney. Have you really the courage to go with me, not only through the stove itself, but to creep through the flue? We shall then come out by the chimney, and then I know how to manage. We shall climb so high that they won't be able to reach us, and quite at the top is a hole that leads out into the wide world."

And he led her to the door of the stove.

"It looks very black," said she: still, in she went with him, both through the stove and through the pipe, where it was as dark as pitch.

"Now we are in the chimney," said he; "and look! there shines the most beautiful star above!"

And it was a real star in the sky that seemed to shine down upon them as though it would light them on their way. And now they climbed and crept, and a frightful way it was—so steep and so high! But he went first, and smoothed it as much as he could; he held her, and showed her the best places to set her little china foot upon, and so

they managed to reach the edge of the chimney-pot, on which they sat down—for they were vastly tired, as may be imagined.

The sky and all its stars was above them, and



"He led her to the door of the stove."

all the roofs of the town lay below. They saw far around them, and a great way out into the wide world. It was not like what the poor shepherdess

had fancied it. She leaned her little head on her chimney-sweeper's shoulder, and cried till she



"The roofs of the town lay below."

washed the gilding off her sash. "This is too

much ! ” said she ; “ it is more than I can bear. The world is too large ! I wish I were safe back on the table under the looking-glass. I shall never be happy till I am once more there. Now I have followed you into the wide world, you can accompany me back if you really love me.”

Then the chimney-sweeper tried to reason with her, and spoke of the old Chinese, and of General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-Sergeant ; but she sobbed so violently, and kissed her little chimney-sweeper, till he could not do otherwise than what she wished, foolish as it was.

And so they climbed down the chimney with infinite difficulty. They next crept through the flue and the stove, which were anything but pleasant places ; and then they stood in the dark stove, and listened behind the door, to catch what might be going forward in the room. All was quiet ; so they peeped out—and behold ! there lay the old Chinese sprawling in the middle of the floor. He had fallen down from the table, when he attempted to pursue them, and lay broken into three pieces : his whole back had come off in one lump, and his head had rolled into a corner. The General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-Sergeant stood where he always had done, and was wrapped in thought.

“ This is shocking ! ” said the little shepherdess ; “ my old grandfather is broken in pieces, and by

our fault ! I shall not be able to survive such a mishap ! ” And so saying, she wrung her little hands.

“ He can be riveted ! ” said the chimney-sweeper — “ he can be riveted. Do not take on so ! If they cement his back, and put a proper rivet through his neck, he will be just as good as new, and will be able to say as many disagreeable things to us as ever.”

“ Do you think so ? ” said she. And then they crept up to the table, where they formerly stood.

“ Since we have got no farther than this,” said the chimney-sweeper, “ we might have saved ourselves a deal of trouble.”

“ I wish grandfather was riveted,” said the shepherdess ; “ I wonder if it costs much ? ”

And riveted sure enough he was. The family had his back cemented, and an efficient rivet run through his neck. He was as good as new, except that he could no longer nod.

“ You have become proud since you were broken to shivers,” observed General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandyls-Field-Sergeant. “ Me-thinks there is no reason why you should be so captious. Am I to have her or not ? ”

And the chimney-sweeper and the little shepherdess looked most touchingly at the old Chinese. They were afraid he would nod. But he could not ; and it would have been derogatory to have confessed to a stranger that he had a rivet in his neck.

And so the china couple remained together, and blessed the grandfather's rivet, and loved each other till they were broken to pieces.



"His head had rolled into a corner."

The Ice-Maiden ; or, the Eagle's Nest

I

LITTLE RUDY



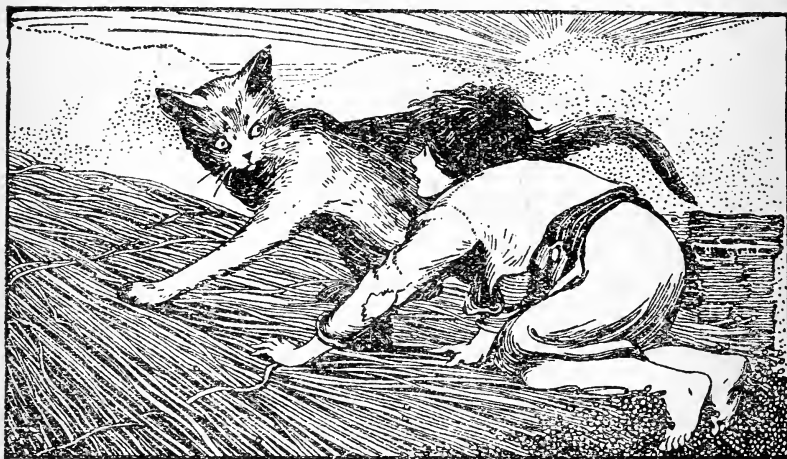
LET us now go to Switzerland, and see its wonderful mountains, whose steep, rocky sides are covered with trees. We will climb up to the fields of snow, and then make our way down to the grassy valleys, with their countless streams and rivulets, impetuous rushing to lose themselves in the sea. The sunshine is hot in the narrow valley ; the snow becomes firm and solid, and in the course of time it either descends as an avalanche, or creeps along as a glacier. There are two of these glaciers in the valleys below the Schreckhorn and the Wetterhorn, near the long village of Grindelwald. They are a

remarkable sight, and therefore many travellers from all countries come in the summer to visit them : they come over the high mountains covered with snow, they traverse the deep valleys ; and to do this they must climb, hour after hour, leaving the valley far beneath them, till they see it as if they were in an air-balloon. The clouds hang above them like thick mists over the mountains, and the sun's rays make their way through the openings between the clouds to where the brown houses lie spread, lighting up some chance spot with a vivid green. Below, the stream foams and blusters ; but above it murmurs and ripples, and looks like a band of silver hanging down the side of the rock.

On either side of the path up the mountain lie wooden houses. Each house has its little plot of potatoes ; and this they all require, for there are many children, and they all have good appetites. The children come out to meet every stranger, whether walking or riding, and ask him to buy their carved wooden châteaux, made like the houses they live in. Be it fine or be it wet, the children try to sell their carvings.

About twenty years since you might have seen one little boy standing apart from the others, but evidently very desirous to dispose of his wares. He looked grave and sad, and held his little tray tightly with both hands as if he was afraid of losing it. This serious look and his small size

caused him to be much noticed by travellers, who often called him and purchased many of his toys, though he did not know why he was so favoured. His grandfather lived two miles off among the mountains, where he did his carving. He had a cabinet full of the things he had made. There were nut-crackers, knives and forks, boxes carved



“ ‘Come with me on the roof,’ said the cat.”

with leaves and chamois, and many toys for children ; but little Rudy cared for nothing so much as for an old gun, hanging from a rafter in the ceiling, for his grandfather had told him it should be his own when he was big enough to know how to use it.

Though the boy was little, he was set in charge of the goats ; and Rudy could climb as high as

any of his flock, and was fond of climbing tall trees after birds' nests. He was brave and high-spirited, but he never smiled except when he watched the foaming cataract, or heard the thundering roar of an avalanche. He never joined in the children's games, and only met them when his grandfather sent him to sell his carvings ; and this employment Rudy did not much like. He would rather wander alone amongst the mountains, or sit by his grandfather while he told him stories of former ages, or of the people who lived at Meiringen, from whence he had come. He told him they had not always lived there, but had come from a distant northern country called Sweden. Rudy took great pride in this knowledge ; but he also learnt much from his four-footed friends. He had a large dog, named Ajola, who had been his father's ; and he had also a tom-cat who was his particular friend, for it was from him he had learnt how to climb.

"Come with me on the roof," the cat said to him ; for when children have not learnt to talk, they can understand the speech of birds and animals quite as well as that of their father and mother ; but that is only while they are very little, and their grandfather's stick seems as good as a live horse, with head, legs, and tail. Some children lose this later than others, and we call them backward. People say such funny things !

"Come with me, little Rudy, on the roof,"

was one of the first things the cat had said which Rudy had understood : " it is all imagination about falling ; you don't fall if you are not afraid. Come ; put one of your paws so, and the other so ! Feel for yourself with your forepaws ! Use your eyes and be active ; and if there's a crevice, just spring and take firm hold, as I do ! "

Rudy did as he was told, and you might often have seen him sitting beside the cat on the top of the roof ; afterwards they climbed together to the tops of the trees, and Rudy even found his way to the rocky ledges which were quite out of the cat's reach.

" Higher ! higher ! " said the trees and the bushes ;

" see how we can climb. We stretch upwards, and take firm hold of the highest and narrowest ledges of the rocks. "

So Rudy found his way to the very top of the mountain, and often got up there before sunrise ;



" Rudy loved the morning air. "

for he enjoyed the pure invigorating air, fresh from the hands of the Creator, which men say combines the delicate perfume of the mountain herbs with the sweet scent of the wild thyme and the mint found in the valley. The grosser part of it is taken up by the clouds, and as they are carried by the winds, the lofty trees catch the fragrance and make the air pure and fresh. And so Rudy loved the morning air.

The happy sunbeams kissed his cheek, and Giddiness, who was always near, was afraid to touch him ; the swallows, who had built seven little nests under his grandfather's eaves, circled about him and his goats, singing : " We and you ! and you and we ! " They reminded him of his home, his grandfather, and of the fowls ; but although the fowls lived with them in the same house, Rudy had never made friends with them.

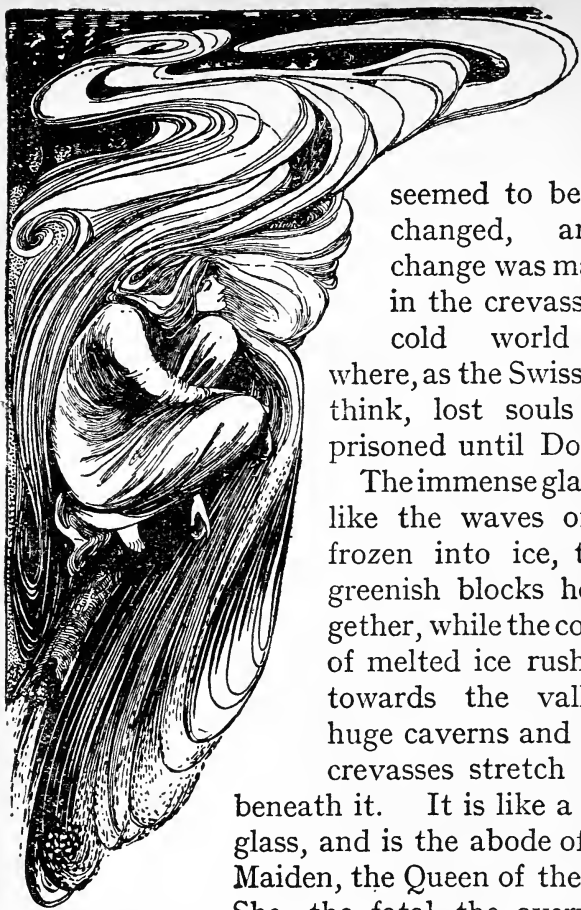
Although he was such a little boy, he had already travelled a considerable distance. His birthplace was in the canton of Vallais, whence he had been brought over the mountains to where he now lived. He had even made his way on foot to the Staubach, which descends through the air gleaming like silver below the snow-clad mountain called the Jungfrau. He had also been to the great glacier at Grindelwald ; but that was a sad story. His mother lost her life at that spot ; and Rudy's grandfather said that it was there he had lost his happy spirits. Before he was a twelvemonth old his mother used

to say that he laughed more than he cried, but since he had been rescued from the crevasse in the ice, a different spirit seemed to have possession of him. His grandfather would not talk of it, but every one in that district knew the story.



Rudy's father " They still had to cross one great glacier."
had been a postilion. The large dog, which was now lying in the grandfather's room, was his constant companion when travelling over the Simplon on his way to the Lake of Geneva. Some of his relations lived in the Valley of the Rhone, in the

canton of Vallais. His uncle was a successful chamois-hunter and an experienced guide. When Rudy was only a twelvemonth old, his father died, and his mother now wished to return to her own relations in the Bernese Oberland. Her father lived not many miles from Grindelwald ; he was able to maintain himself by wood-carving. So she started on her journey in the month of June, with her child in her arms, and in the company of two chamois-hunters, over the Gemmi towards Grindelwald. They had accomplished the greater part of their journey, had passed the highest ridge and reached the snow-field, and were now come in sight of the valley where her home was, with its well-remembered wooden houses, but still had to cross one great glacier. It was covered with recent snow, which hid a crevasse which was much deeper than the height of a man, although it did not extend to where the water rushed below the glacier. The mother, while carrying her baby, slipped, fell into the cleft, and disappeared from sight. She did not utter a sound, but they could hear the child crying. It was more than an hour before they could fetch ropes and poles from the nearest house, and recover what seemed to be two corpses from the cleft in the ice. They tried every possible means, and succeeded in restoring the child, but not his mother, to life ; so the old man had his daughter's son brought into his home, a little orphan, the boy who used to



"The Queen of the Glaciers."

laugh
more
than he
cried ;
but he

seemed to be entirely changed, and this change was made down in the crevasse, in the cold world of ice, where, as the Swiss peasants think, lost souls are imprisoned until Doomsday.

The immense glacier looks like the waves of the sea frozen into ice, the great greenish blocks heaped together, while the cold stream of melted ice rushes below towards the valley, and huge caverns and immense crevasses stretch far away

beneath it. It is like a palace of glass, and is the abode of the Ice-Maiden, the Queen of the Glaciers. She, the fatal, the overwhelming one, is in part a spirit of the air,

though she also rules over the river ; therefore she can rise to the topmost peak of the snow mountain, where the adventurous climbers have

to cut every step in the ice before they can place their feet ; she can float on the smallest branch down the torrent, and leap from block to block with her white hair and her pale blue robe flying about her, and resembling the water in the beautiful Swiss lakes.

“ I have the power to crush and to seize ! ” she cries. “ They have robbed me of a lovely boy whom I have kissed, but have not killed. He now lives among men ; he keeps his goats amid the hills, he ever climbs higher and higher away from his fellows, but not away from me. He belongs to me, and I will again have him ! ”

So she charged Giddiness to seize him for her, for the Ice-Maiden dared not venture among the woods in the hot summer time ; and Giddiness and his brethren—for there are many of them—mounted up to the Ice-Maiden, and she selected the strongest of them for her purpose. They sit on the edge of the staircase, and on the rails at the top of the tower ; they scamper like squirrels on the ridge of the rock, they leap from the rails and the footpath, and tread the air like a swimmer treading water, to tempt their victims after them and dash them into the abyss. Both Giddiness and the Ice-Maiden seize a man as an octopus seizes all within its reach. And now Giddiness had been charged to seize little Rudy.

“ I seize him ! ” said Giddiness ; “ I cannot. The miserable cat has taught him all her tricks.

The boy possesses a power which keeps me from him ; I cannot seize him even when he hangs by a branch above the precipice. I should be delighted to tickle his feet, or pitch him headlong through the air ; but I cannot ! ”

“ We will succeed between us,” said the Ice-Maiden. “ Thou or I ! I ! I ! ”



“ The cold kisses which the Queen of the Glaciers had given him.”

“ No, no ! ” an unseen voice replied, sounding like distant church bells ; the joyful singing of good spirits—the Daughters of the Sun. These float above the mountain every evening ; they expand their rosy wings which glow more and more like fire as the sun nears to setting over the snowy peaks. People call it the “ Alpine glow.”

And after sunset they withdraw into the snow and rest there until sunrise, when they again show themselves. They love flowers, and butterflies, and human beings; and they were particularly fond of Rudy.

"You shall never catch him—you shall never have him," said they.

"I have captured bigger and stronger boys than he," said the Ice-Maiden.

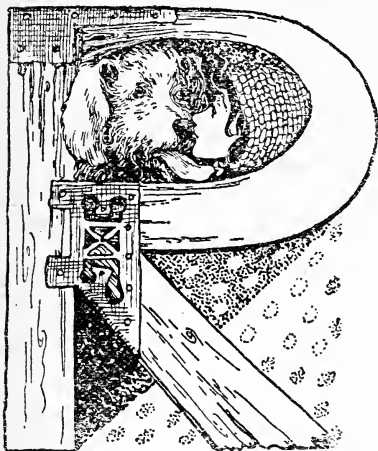
The Daughters of the Sun now sang a song of a traveller whose cloak was carried away by the storm: "The storm took the cloak, but not the man. You can grasp at him, but not hold him, ye strong ones. He is stronger, he is more spiritual than we are! He will ascend above the sun, our mother! He has the power to bind the winds and the waves, and make them serve him and do his bidding. If you unloose the weight that holds him down, you will set him free to rise yet higher."

Thus ran the chorus, which sounded like distant church bells.

Each morning the sunbeams shone through the little window of the grandfather's house, and lighted on the silent boy. The Daughters of the Sun kissed him, and tried to thaw the cold kisses which the Queen of the Glaciers had given him, while he was in the arms of his dead mother, in the deep crevasse, whence he had been so wonderfully rescued.

II

GOING TO THE NEW HOME



UDY was now a boy of eight. His uncle, who lived in the Rhone valley at the other side of the mountains, wished him to come to him, and learn how to make his way in the world ; his grandfather approved of this, and let him go.

Rudy therefore said good-bye. He had to take leave of others besides his grandfather ; and the first of these was his old dog, Ajola.

"When your father was postillion, I was his post-dog," said Ajola. "We travelled backwards and forwards together ; and I know some dogs at the other side of the mountains and some of the people. I was never a chatterer ; but now that we are not likely to have many more chances of talking, I want to tell you a few things. I will tell you something I have had in my head and thought over for a long time. I can't make it out, and you

won't make it out ; but that doesn't matter. At least I can see that things are not fairly divided in this world, whether for dogs or for men. Only a few are privileged to sit in a lady's lap and have milk to drink. I've never been used to it myself, but I've seen a little lap-dog riding in the coach, and occupying the place of a passenger. The lady to whom it belonged, or who belonged to it, took a bottle of milk with her for the dog to drink ; and she offered him sweets, but he sniffed at them and refused them, so she ate them herself. I had to run in the mud beside the coach, and was very hungry, thinking all the time that this couldn't be right ; but they say that there are a great many things that aren't right. Would you like to sit in a lady's lap and ride in a carriage ? I wish you could. But you can't arrange that for yourself. I never could, bark and howl as I might ! ”

This is what Ajola said ; and Rudy put his arms round him, and kissed his cold, wet nose. Then he took up the cat, but puss tried to get away, and said—

“ You're too strong ! and I don't want to scratch you. Climb over the mountains, as I taught you. Don't fancy you can fall, and then you will always keep firm hold.” As he said this, the cat ran away ; for he did not wish Rudy to see that he was crying.

The fowls strutted about the room. One of

them had lost its tail feathers. A tourist, who imagined he was a sportsman, had shot its tail off, as he thought it was a wild bird.

"Rudy is going away over the mountains," said one of the fowls.

The other one replied, "He's in too great a



"They bleated 'Med ! Med ! May !' "

hurry ; I don't want to say good-bye." And then they both made off.

He then said good-bye to the goats ; they bleated "Med ! med ! may !" and that made him feel sad.

Two neighbouring guides, who wanted to cross the mountains to beyond the Gemmi, took Rudy with them, going on foot. It was a fatiguing

walk for such a little boy ; but he was strong, and never feared anything.

The swallows flew part of the way with them. "We and you ! and you and we !" they sang. Their route lay across the roaring Lüttschine, which flows in many little streams from the Grindel glacier, and some fallen trees served for a bridge. When they gained the forest at the other side, they began to mount the slope where the glacier had quitted the mountain, and then they had to climb over or make their way round the blocks of ice on the glacier. Rudy sometimes was obliged to crawl instead of walking ; but his eyes sparkled with pleasure, and he planted his feet so firmly that you would think he wanted to leave the mark of his spiked shoes behind him at every step. The dark earth which the mountain torrent had scattered over the glacier made it look almost black, but still you could catch sight of the bluish-green ice. They had to skirt the countless little pools which lay amongst the huge blocks of ice ; and sometimes they passed by a great stone that had rested at the edge of a cleft, and then the stone would be upset and crash down into the crevasse, and the echoes would reverberate from all the deep clefts in the glacier.

So they went on climbing. The mighty glacier seemed like a great river frozen into ice, hemmed in by the steep rocks. Rudy remembered what he had been told, of how he and his mother had been

pulled up out of one of those deep, cold crevasses ; but he soon thought no more of it, and it seemed no more than many other stories which he had been told. Occasionally, when the men thought the path too rough for the boy, they offered him a hand ; but he was not easily tired, and stood on the ice as securely as a chamois. Now they got on rock, and clambered over the rough stones ; then they would have to walk through the pine-trees, or over pasture-lands, whilst the landscape was constantly changing. Around them were its great snow mountains—the Jungfrau, the Mönch, and the Eiger. Every child knew their names, and, of course, Rudy knew them. Rudy had never before been up so high ; he had never walked over the wide snow-fields ; like the ocean with its waves immovable, the wind now and again blowing off some of the snow as if it were the foam of its sea. The glaciers meet here as if they were joining hands ; each forms one of the palaces of the Ice-Maiden, whose power and aim is to capture and overwhelm. The sunshine was hot, the snow was brilliantly white, and seemed to sparkle as if covered with diamonds. Countless insects, most of them butterflies or bees, were lying dead on the snow ; they had gone up too high, or been carried by the wind, and had been frozen to death. A threatening cloud hung over the Wetterhorn, looking like a bundle of black wool ; it hung down, heavy with its own weight, ready to burst with

the resistless force of a whirlwind. The recollection of this whole journey—the encamping for the night at such a height, the walk in the dark, the deep clefts in the rock, worn away by the force of water during countless years—all this was fixed in Rudy's memory.

An empty stone hut beyond the *mer de glace* gave them shelter for the night. Here they found pine branches for fuel, and they quickly made a fire and arranged the bed as comfortably as they could. They then seated themselves about the fire, lighted their pipes, and drank the hot drink which they had prepared. They gave Rudy some of their supper, and then began to tell tales and legends of the spirits of the Alps ; of the mighty serpents that lay coiled in the lakes ; of the spirits who were reported to have carried men in their sleep to the marvellous floating city, Venice ; of the mysterious shepherd, who tended his black sheep on the mountain pastures, and how no one had seen him, although many had heard the tones of his bell and the bleating of his flock. Rudy listened to all this, though he was not frightened, as he did not know what fear was ; and as he was listening he thought he heard the weird bleating ; it grew more and more distinct till the men heard it too, and left off talking to listen and told Rudy to keep awake.

This was the Föhn, the blast, the terrible tempest, which sweeps down from the mountains

upon the valleys, rending the trees as if they were reeds, and sweeping away the houses by a flood as easily as one moves chessmen.

After a time they said to Rudy that it was all over, and he might go to sleep ; and he was so tired with his long tramp that he obeyed at once.

When day broke, they pushed forward. The sun now shone for Rudy on new mountains, new glaciers, and snow-fields. They were now in the canton of Vallais, and had crossed the range which



" The mysterious shepherd and his black sheep."

could be seen from Grindelwald, but were yet far from his new home. Other ravines, other pastures, woods, and mountain-paths now came into sight, other houses, and other people ; but they were strange and deformed-looking beings, with pale faces, and huge wens hanging from their necks.

They were *crétins*, feebly moving about, and looking listlessly at Rudy and his companions—the women were particularly repulsive to look at. Should he find such people in his new home?

III UNCLE



UDY had now come to his uncle's house and found to his relief that the people were like those he had been used to. There was only one *crétin*, a poor silly boy—one of those who rove from one house to another in

the canton of Vallais, staying a month or two in each house, and the unfortunate Saperli was there when Rudy came.

Uncle was a great hunter, and also knew the cooper's trade. His wife was a lively little person, and almost looked like a bird; her eyes were like those of an eagle, and her long neck was quite downy.

Rudy found everything new to him—dress, habits and customs, and language, though he

would soon get used to that. They seemed more comfortably off than in his grandfather's house. The rooms were large, and the walls were decorated with chamois' horns and polished guns, and there was a picture of the Virgin over the door; fresh Alpine roses and a burning lamp stood before it.

Uncle was, as I have said, one of the most successful chamois-hunters in the neighbourhood, and also one of the best guides. Rudy soon became the pet of the household. They had one pet already, an old hound, blind and deaf; he was no longer able to go out hunting, but they took care of him in return for his former services. Rudy patted the dog, and wished to make friends; but he did not care to make friends with strangers, though Rudy was not long a stranger there.

"We live very well here in the canton of Vallais," said uncle; "we have chamois, who are not so easily killed as the steinbock, but we get on better than in the old days. It is all very well to praise former times, but we are better off now. An opening has been made, and the air blows through our secluded vale. We always get something better when the old thing is done with," said he; for uncle had much to say, and would tell tales of his childhood, and of the days when his father was vigorous, when Vallais was, as he said, a closed bag, full of sick folk and unfortunate *crétins*; "but the French soldiers came, and they were the right sort of doctors, for they killed both the disease

and the persons who had it. The French knew all about fighting; they struck their blows in many ways, and their maidens could strike too!" and here uncle nodded at his wife, who was a Frenchwoman. "The French struck at our



"His uncle would tell tales of his childhood."

stones in fine style! They struck the Simplon road through the rocks; they struck the road, so that I may say to a child of three years old, 'Go to Italy, keep right on the highway!' and the child

will find himself in Italy if he only keeps right on the road ! ” and then uncle sang a French song, “ Hurrah for Napoleon Buonaparte ! ”

Rudy now heard for the first time of France, and of Lyons, a great town on the river Rhone, where his uncle had been.

In a few years Rudy was to become an active chamois-hunter. His uncle said he was capable of it ; he therefore taught him to handle a gun and to shoot. In the hunting season he took him to the mountains, and made him drink the warm blood from the chamois, which keeps a hunter from giddiness. He taught him to know the seasons when avalanches would roll down the mountain sides, at mid-day or in the afternoon, according to whether the sun had been strong on the places. He taught him to watch how the chamois sprang, and notice how his feet fell that he might stand firm ; and that where he could obtain no foothold he must catch hold with his elbows, grasp with his muscles, and hold with his thighs and knees—that he might even hold with his neck if necessary. The chamois were very wary—they would send one to look out ; but the hunter must be still more wary—put them off the scent. He had known them so stupid that if he hung his coat and hat on an alpenstock, the chamois took the coat for a man. Uncle played this trick one day when he and Rudy were out hunting.

The mountain paths were narrow ; they were often a mere cornice or ledge projecting over a giddy precipice. The snow was half melted, and the rock crumbled beneath the feet ; so the uncle laid himself down at full length and crept along.

Each stone, as it broke off, fell, striking and rolling from ledge to ledge till it was out of sight. Rudy stood about a hundred paces from his uncle on a projecting rock, and from this point he saw a great bearded vulture swooping over his uncle, whom it seemed to be about to strike over the precipice with its wings, to make him its prey. Uncle had his eye on the chamois, which he



"Rudy clung to the stem of a tree."

could see with its kid on the other side of the ravine ; Rudy kept his eye on the bird, knew what it would do, and had his hands on his gun ready to fire ; the chamois suddenly sprang up, uncle fired, the animal fell dead, the kid made off as if it was used to dangers. At the sound of the gun the bird flew away, and uncle knew nothing of his danger until told of it by Rudy.

As they were going home in the best of humours, uncle whistling one of his songs, they suddenly heard a strange noise not far off ; they looked round them, and saw that the snow on the side of the mountain was all in motion. It waved up and down, broke into pieces, and came down with a roar like thunder. It was an avalanche, not over Rudy and uncle, but near, too near, to them.

“ Hold fast, Rudy ! ” he shouted ; “ fast, with all your power ! ”

And Rudy clung to the stem of a tree ; uncle climbed above him up to the branches and held fast, while the avalanche rolled past at a distance of a few yards ; but the rush of air broke the trees and bushes all around like reeds, and cast the fragments down, and left Rudy pressed to the earth. The tree-stem to which he had held was broken, and the top flung to a distance ; there, among the broken branches, lay uncle, his head crushed ; his hand was still warm, but you would not know his face. Rudy stood pale and

trembling ; it was the first shock in his life, the first time he had felt horror.

It was late when he brought the tidings of death to what was now a sorrowful home. The wife was speechless and tearless until they brought the



" ' Write a letter for me to the Lord Christ.' "

body home, then her grief broke forth. The unfortunate *crétin* hid himself in his bed, nor did they see him all the next day ; but in the evening he came to Rudy.

"Write a letter for me! Saperli cannot write! Saperli can go with the letter to the post!"

"A letter from thee?" exclaimed Rudy.

"And to whom?"

"To the Lord Christ!"

"What do you mean?"

And the half-idiot, as they called the *crétin* cast a pathetic glance at Rudy, folded his hands, and said solemnly and slowly:

"Jesus Christ! Saperli wishes to send a letter to ask Him that Saperli may lie dead, and not the man in this house."

And Rudy took him by the hand. "That letter would not go there! that letter would not bring him back."

But it was impossible for Rudy to make him understand.

"Now thou art the support of the house," said the widow, and Rudy became so.

IV

BABETTE

Who is the best shot in the canton of Vallais? Even the chamois knew. "Take care of Rudy's shooting!" they said. "Who is the handsomest huntsman?" "Rudy is!" said the maidens, but they did not say, "Take care of Rudy's

shooting!" nor did their serious mothers say so either; he nodded to them as lightly as he did to a young girl; for he was brave and joyous, his cheeks were brown, his teeth sound and white, and his eyes coal-black and sparkling; he was a handsome fellow, and not more than twenty. The ice-cold water did not hurt him in swimming; he swam like a fish, could climb better than any other man, could hold fast like a snail to the walls of rock, for his muscles and sinews were good; and you saw when he leapt that he had taken lessons from the cat and from the chamois. Rudy was the surest guide to depend on, and might have made his fortune in that way; his uncle had also taught him coopering, but he gave little thought to that, for his pleasure and delight was in shooting the chamois; and in this way he earned money. Rudy was a good match, as they say, if he did not look above his own position. And he was a dancer among dancers, so that the maidens dreamt of him, and some of them even thought of him when waking.

"He gave me a kiss at the dance!" said Annette, the schoolmaster's daughter, to her dearest friend; but she ought not to have said that, even to her dearest friend. Such a secret is not easy to keep: it is like sand in a bag full of holes, it will run out; and they all soon knew that Rudy had given her a kiss at the dance, though he had not kissed the one that he wanted to kiss.



“ ‘ He gave me a kiss at the dance.’ ”

“ Just watch him ! ” said an old huntsman ; “ he has kissed Annette ; he has begun with A, and he will kiss all through the alphabet.”

A kiss at the dance was all that the gossips could say against Rudy so far ; but although he had kissed Annette, she was not the flower of his heart.

Down at Bex, among the great walnut - trees, close to a little rapid mountain stream, there lived a rich miller ; his dwelling-

house was a big building of three floors, with small turrets, roofed with shingle and ornamented with metal plates which shone in the rays of the sun or the moon ; the biggest turret had for a weather-cock

a glittering arrow which had transfixed an apple, in memory of Tell's marksmanship. The mill appeared fine and prosperous, and one could both sketch and describe it, but one could not sketch or describe the miller's daughter; at least, Rudy says one could not, and yet he had her image in his heart. Her eyes had so beamed upon him that they had quite kindled a flame; this had come quite suddenly, as other fires come, and the strangest thing was, that the miller's daughter, the charming Babette, had no thought of it, as she and Rudy had never spoken to each other.

The miller was rich, and his riches made Babette hard to approach; "But nothing is so high," said Rudy to himself, "that a man can't get up to it; a man must climb, and he need not fall, nor lose faith in himself." This lesson he had learnt at home.

It happened one day that Rudy had business at Bex, and it was quite a journey, for the railway did not then go there. From the Rhone glacier, at the foot of the Simplon, between many and various mountain-heights, stretches the broad valley of the Rhone, whose flood often overflows its banks, overwhelming everything. Between the towns of Sion and St. Maurice the valley bends in the shape of an elbow, and below St. Maurice it is so narrow that it hardly allows room for more than the river itself and a narrow road. An old tower stands here on the mountain side, as a sentry to mark

the boundary of the canton of Vallais, opposite the stone bridge by the toll-house ; and here begins the canton Vaud, not far from the town of Bex. As you advance you notice the increase of fertility, you seem to have come into a garden of chestnuts and walnut-trees ; here and there are cypresses and pomegranates in flower ; there is a southern warmth, as if you had come into Italy.

Rudy arrived at Bex, finished his business, and looked about him ; but never a lad from the mill, not to mention Babette, could he see. This was not what he wished.

It was now towards evening ; the air was full of the scent of the wild thyme and of the flowers of the limes ; a shining veil seemed to hang over the wooded mountains, with a stillness, not of sleep, nor of death, but rather as if nature were holding its breath, in order to have its likeness photographed on the blue vault of heaven. Here and there between the trees, and across the green fields stood poles, to support the telegraph wires, already carried through that tranquil valley ; by one of these leaned an object, so still that it might have been mistaken for a tree-stump, but it was Rudy, who was as still and quiet as everything about him ; he was not asleep, and he certainly was not dead. But thoughts were rushing through his brain, thoughts mighty and overwhelming, which were to mould his future.

His eyes were directed to one point amidst the

leaves, one light in the miller's parlour where Babette lived. So still was Rudy standing, that



"The parlour cat stood on the steps."

you might believe he was taking aim at a chamois, for the chamois will sometimes stand for an instant as if a part of the rock, and then suddenly, startled by the rolling of a stone, will spring away ; and so it was with Rudy—a sudden thought startled him.

“Never give up !” he cried. “Call at the mill ! Good evening to the miller, good day to Babette. A man doesn’t fall when he doesn’t think about it ; Babette must see me at some time if I am ever to be her husband.”

Rudy laughed, for he was of good cheer, and he went to the mill ; he knew well enough what he wished for—he wished for Babette.

The river, with its yellowish water, rushed along, and the willows and limes overhung its banks ; Rudy went up the path, and as it says in the old children’s song :

“to the miller’s house,
But found no one at home
Except little Puss !”

The parlour cat stood on the steps, put up his back, and said “Miou !” but Rudy had no thought for that speech ; he knocked at the door ; no one heard, no one opened it. “Miou !” said the cat. If Rudy had been little, he would have understood animals’ language, and known that the cat said : “There’s no one at home !” So he went over to the mill to ask, and there he got the information. The master had gone on a

journey, as far as the town of Interlaken, "*inter lacūs*, between the lakes," as the schoolmaster, Annette's father, had explained it in a lesson. The miller was far away, and Babette with him ; there was a grand shooting competition—it began to-morrow, and went on for eight days. Switzers from all the German cantons would be there.

Unlucky Rudy, you might say, this was not a fortunate time to come to Bex ; so he turned and marched above St. Maurice and Sion to his own valley and his own mountains ; but he was not disheartened. The sun rose next morning, but his spirits were already high, for they had never set.

"Babette is at Interlaken, many days' journey from hence," he said to himself. "It is a long way there if one goes by the high road, but it is not so far if you strike across the mountains, as I have often done in chamois-hunting. There is my old home, where I lived when little with my grandfather ; and the shooting-match is at Interlaken ! I will be the best of them ; and I will be with Babette, when I have made acquaintance with her."

With his light knapsack, containing his Sunday suit and his gun and game-bag, Rudy went up the mountain by the short way, which was, however, pretty long ; but the shooting-match only began that day and was to last over a week, and all that time, he was told, the miller and Babette

would spend with their relations at Interlaken. So Rudy crossed the Gemmi, meaning to come down near Grindelwald.

Healthy and joyful, he stepped along, up in the fresh, the light, the invigorating mountain air. The valley sank deeper, the horizon opened wider ; here was a snow-peak, and there another, and soon he could see the whole shining range of the Alps. Rudy knew every snow-mountain, and he made straight for the Schreckhorn, which raised its white-sprinkled, stony fingers high into the blue air.

At length he crossed the highest ridge. The pastures stretched down towards his own valley ; the air was light, and he felt merry ; mountain and valley smiled with abundance of flowers and verdure ; his heart was full of thoughts of youth : one should never become old, one need never die ; to live, to conquer, to be happy ! free as a bird—and he felt like a bird. And the swallows flew by him, and sang, as they used to do in his childhood : “ We and you, and you and we ! ” All was soaring and rejoicing.

Below lay the velvety green meadow, sprinkled with brown châteaux, and the Lütschine humming and rushing. He saw the glacier, with its bottle-green edges covered with earth-soiled snow ; he saw the deep fissures, and the upper and the lower glacier. The sound of the church bells came to him, as if they were ringing to welcome him

home ; his heart beat more strongly, and swelled so that Babette was forgotten for a moment, so large was his heart and so full of memories !

He again went along the way where he had stood as a little urchin with the other children, and sold the carved châlets. He saw among the pines his grandfather's house, but strangers now lived in it. Children came along the path to sell things, and one of them

offered him an Alpine rose ; Rudy took it as a good omen and he thought of Babette. He soon crossed the bridge where the two Lütchine unite ; the trees here grew thicker, and the walnuts gave a refreshing shade. He now saw the flag waving, the white cross on a red background, the flag of the Switzers



" Offered him an Alpine rose."

and the Danes; and now he had reached Inter-laken.

This, Rudy thought, was certainly a splendid town. It was a Swiss town in Sunday dress; not like other places, crowded with heavy stone houses, ponderous, strange, and stately. No! here it seemed as if the *châlets* had come down from the mountains into the green valley, close by the clear, rapid stream, and had arranged themselves in a row, a little in and out, to make a street. And the prettiest of all the streets—yes, that it certainly was!—had sprung up since Rudy was here, when he was little. It seemed to have been built of all the charming *châlets* which his grandfather had carved and stored in the cabinet at home, and they had grown up here by some power like the old, oldest chestnut-trees. Each house was a hotel, with carved woodwork on the windows and doors, and a projecting roof, and was elegantly built; and in front of the house was a flower-garden, between it and the broad, macadamized road; all the houses stood on one side of the road, so as not to hide the fresh green meadows, where the cows wandered about with bells like those in the high Alpine pastures. It seemed to be in the midst of lofty mountains, which had drawn apart in one direction to allow the snow-clad peak of the Jungfrau to be seen, most lovely of all the Swiss mountains.

There were a great many well-dressed visitors

from foreign countries as well as many Switzers from the different cantons. Each competitor had his number in a garland on his hat. Singing and playing on all kinds of instruments were to be heard everywhere, mingled with cries and shouts. Mottoes were put up on the houses and bridges, flags and pennons floated in the breeze; the crack of the rifles was frequently heard, and Rudy thought this the sweetest sound of all; indeed, in the excitement of the moment he quite forgot Babette, although he had come on purpose to meet her.

The marksmen now went in the direction of the target. Rudy went with them, and was the best shot of them all—he hit the bull’s-eye every time.

“Who is that young stranger who shoots so well?” the onlookers asked each other. “He talks French as they do in canton Vallais. But he also speaks German very well,” others replied.

“They say he was brought up near Grindelwald,” one of the competitors remarked.

There was life in the fellow, his eyes shone, his arm was steady, and for that reason he never failed in hitting the mark. Courage comes with success, but Rudy had a store of natural courage. Admiring friends soon gathered around him, and complimented him on his success; he altogether forgot Babette. Then some one laid his hand on his shoulder, and spoke to him in French.

" You belong to the canton of Vallais ? "

Rudy turned, and saw a burly individual with a rosy, good-humoured face. It was the wealthy miller from Bex ; his stout form almost concealed the pretty, slim Babette, but she looked at Rudy with her sparkling dark eyes. The miller was glad that a rifleman from his own canton should prove the best shot, and should have won universal applause. Rudy was certainly in luck, for although he had forgotten his principal object in coming, she had now come forward to him.

When neighbours meet one another at a distance from home they generally get talking, and make each other's acquaintance. Because Rudy was a good shot he had become a leader at the rifle competition, just as much as the miller was at Bex, because of his wealth and his good business ; so they clasped each other by the hand for the first time ; Babette also offered her hand to Rudy, who squeezed it, and looked at her so earnestly that she quite blushed.

The miller spoke of their long journey, and how many large towns they had come through ; and it certainly seemed to have been a very long journey, as they had travelled by the steamboat, and also by rail and by post-chaise.

" I came the nearest way," said Rudy. " I walked over the mountains ; no road is too high for a man to come over it."

" And break your neck," said the miller. " You

look just the man to break his neck one day, you look so headstrong."

"A man doesn't fall if he doesn't think about it," replied Rudy.

The miller's relatives in Interlaken, with whom he and Barbette were staying, asked Rudy to



"Singing and playing on all kinds of instruments."

visit them, as he was from the same canton. This was a chance for Rudy; fortune favoured him, as she always does favour those who endeavour to succeed by their own energy, and remember that "Providence gives us nuts, but we have to crack them for ourselves."

Rudy was welcomed by the miller's relatives

as if he had belonged to the family, and they drank to the health of the best shot, and Babette clinked her glass with the others, and Rudy thanked them for the toast.

In the evening they went for a stroll on the road by the big hotels beneath the old walnut-trees, and there was such a throng, and the people pushed so that Rudy was able to offer his arm to Babette. He said he was glad to have met the people from Vaud. The cantons of Vaud and Vallais were very good neighbours. He seemed so thoroughly pleased that Babette could not resist the inclination to press his hand. They walked together just like old acquaintances, and she was very amusing. Rudy was delighted with her naïve remarks on the peculiarities in the dress and behaviour of the foreign ladies ; and yet she did not wish to make fun of them, for she knew that many of them were amiable and worthy people—indeed, her own godmother was an English lady. She had been living in Bex eighteen years ago, when Babette was christened, and she had given her the valuable brooch she was now wearing. Her godmother had twice written to her, and Babette was now hoping to see her and her daughters in Interlaken. “ They were two old maids, almost thirty ! ” said Babette ; but you must remember that she was only eighteen.

Her little tongue was never still for an instant, and all that Babette had to say was intensely

interesting to Rudy ; and he told her all about himself—that he had frequently been to Bex, and knew the mill well, and that he had often seen her, though he did not suppose she had ever noticed him ; and how he had called at the mill, hoping to see her, and found that her father and she were away from home, a long way from home indeed, but not so far that he could not get over the barrier which divided them.

He told her a great deal more than this. He told her that he was very fond of her, and that he had come here on purpose to see her, and not for the rifle competition.

Babette was very quiet when he told her this ; she thought he set too high a value on her.

While they continued rambling, the sun set behind the mighty wall of rock ; the Jungfrau stood out in all its beauty and magnificence, with the green of the tree-clad slopes on either side of it. All stood still to admire the gorgeous spectacle, and both Rudy and Babette were happy in watching it.

“ There is no place more lovely than this ! ” said Babette.

“ No indeed ! ” exclaimed Rudy, and then he looked at Babette.

“ I must go home to-morrow,” he said, after a short silence.

“ You must come to see us at Bex,” Babette whispered to him ; “ my father will be pleased.”

V

THE RETURN HOME



H what a load Rudy had to carry home with him over the mountains the next day! He had won three silver cups, two rifles, and a silver coffee-pot; this would be of use to him

when he began house-keeping. But that was not the heaviest thing; there was something heavier and stronger which he carried with him—or which carried him—on that return journey over the mountains. The weather was wild, dull, heavy and wet; dense clouds covered the mountain tops like a thick veil, quite hiding the snowy peaks. From the valleys he heard the sound of the woodman's axe, and huge trunks of trees rolled down the steep mountain sides; they seemed only like small sticks, but they were big enough for masts. The Lütschine

rushed along with its continual hum, the wind shrieked, and the clouds hurried across the sky. Then Rudy discovered that a young maid was walking at his side ; he had not seen her until she was quite near. She also was about to climb over the mountain. The girl's eyes had a strange



“ ‘ Have you a sweetheart ? ’ said Rudy.”

power ; you could not help looking at them and they were wonderful eyes, very clear and deep—oh, so deep !

“ Have you a sweetheart ? ” said Rudy, for that was all he could think of.

“ No, I have not,” laughingly replied the maiden ; but she did not look as if she spoke the truth.

"Don't go round all that way," she then said. "You must bear more to the left; that is the shortest way."

"Yes, and tumble down a crevasse!" said Rudy. "You're a fine one to be a guide if you don't know better than that!"

"I know the way," she replied, "and my thoughts have not gone astray. Yours are below, in the valley, but here, on high, you should be thinking of the Ice-Maiden; people say that she does not love men."

"I fear her not!" exclaimed Rudy. "She had to yield me up when I was a baby, and I am not going to yield myself up to her now that I am a man."

It grew darker, and the rain poured down; then came the snow, dazzling and bewildering.

"Take my hand," said the maiden, "I will help you;" and she touched him with her ice-cold fingers.

"You needn't help me!" returned Rudy; "I don't need a girl to teach me to climb!" and he hurried on, leaving her behind. The snow came down all around him, the wind shrieked, and he heard strange sounds of laughing and singing behind him. He believed she was one of the spirits in the Ice-Maiden's train, of whom he had heard tales when he spent the night up in the mountains as a boy.

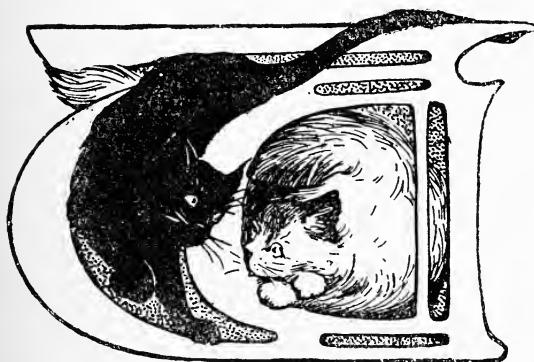
The snow ceased to fall, and he was now above

the clouds. He looked behind him, but saw nobody; yet he heard a strange singing and yodeling that he did not like, as it did not sound human.

When Rudy was quite at the highest ridge, from which the way tended downwards towards the Rhone valley, he saw above Chamonix in a patch of blue sky, two bright stars shining and twinkling; they reminded him of Babette, and of his own good fortune, and the thought made him feel quite warm.

VI

A VISIT TO THE MILL



HAT splendid things you have brought back with you!" cried his old foster-mother; and her

eagle eyes sparkled, and her lean neck waved backwards and forwards more than ever. "You are lucky, Rudy! Let me kiss you, my dear boy!"

And Rudy submitted to be kissed; but he

looked as if he regarded it as a thing which had to be put up with. "What a handsome fellow you are getting, Rudy!" said the old woman.

"Don't talk such nonsense," Rudy replied, laughing; but nevertheless he liked to hear it.

"I say it again," said the old woman. "You are very lucky!"

"Perhaps you may be right," he rejoined, for he was thinking of Babette.

He had never before been so anxious to go down the valley.

"They must have gone home," he said to himself. "They were to have been back two days ago. I must go to Bex."

So Rudy went to Bex, and found his friends at home at the mill. They received him kindly, and had brought a message for him from the family at Interlaken. Babette did not speak much; she was very quiet, but her eyes spoke volumes and that satisfied Rudy. Even the miller who had always led the conversation, and who had always had his remarks and jokes laughed at on account of his wealth, seemed to delight in hearing of all Rudy's adventures in his hunting; and Rudy described the difficulties and perils which the chamois-hunters have to face among the mountains—how they must cling to, or creep over, the narrow ledges of snow which are frozen on to the mountain sides, and make their way over the snow bridges which span deep chasms in the rocks.

And Rudy's eyes sparkled as he was relating these hunting adventures, the intelligence and activity of the chamois, and the dangers of the tempest



"Rudy submitted to be kissed."

and the avalanche. He perceived as he went on that the miller grew increasingly interested in his wild life, and that the old man paid especial attention to his account of the bearded vulture and the royal eagle.

Among other things, he happened to mention that, at no great distance, in the canton of Vallais, an eagle had built its nest most ingeniously under a steep projecting rock, and that the nest contained a young one which nobody could capture. Rudy said that an Englishman had offered him a handful of gold the other day if he could take him the eaglet alive; "but there is a limit to everything," said he. "That eaglet cannot be taken; it would be foolhardy to try."

But the wine assisted the flow of conversation; and Rudy thought the evening all too short, though he did not start on his return journey until past midnight, the first time he visited the mill.

Lights were still to be seen at the windows of the mill; and the parlour cat came out at an opening in the roof, and met the kitchen cat on the gutter.

"Have you heard the news at the mill?" said the parlour cat.



"They trod on me more than once."

"There's love-making going on in the house! The father doesn't know of it. Rudy and Babette have been treading on each other's paws all the evening under the table. They trod on me

more than once, but I kept quiet, lest it should be noticed."

"I would have mewed," replied the kitchen cat.

"Kitchen behaviour will not suit the parlour," said the parlour cat; "but I should like to know what the miller will say when he hears of the love making."

What will the miller say, indeed? Rudy, also, wanted to know that; and he would not wait very long without finding it out. So a few days later, when the omnibus rolled over the Rhone bridge between Vallais and Vaud, Rudy was in it in his usual high spirits, happy in the expectation of a favourable answer to the question he intended to ask that same evening.

In the evening, when the omnibus was returning, Rudy was again inside; but the parlour cat had great news to tell.

"Do you know it, you from the kitchen? The miller knows everything. That was a fine end to the expedition! Rudy came here towards the evening, and he and Babette had much to whisper about; they stood in the passage which leads to the miller's room. I lay at their feet, but they had neither eyes nor thoughts for me. 'I am going straight in to your father!' said Rudy; 'that is the fair thing.' 'Shall I accompany you?' said Babette; 'it will encourage you.' 'I have sufficient courage!' said Rudy, 'but if you go too, he must look kindly on us, whether he will

or no !' And they both went in. Rudy trod violently on my tail. Rudy is very clumsy ! I mewed, but neither he nor Babette had ears to hear me. They opened the door, and they both went in, I in front ; but I sprang up on the back of a chair, for I could not tell how Rudy would kick. But the miller kicked ! and it was a good kick ! out of the door, and into the mountains to the chamois ! Rudy may aim at them, and not at our little Babette."

"But what did they talk about ?" asked the kitchen cat.

"Talk ?—— They talked of everything that people say when they go a-wooing : 'I am fond of her, and she is fond of me ! and when there is milk in the pail for one, there is also milk in the pail for two !' 'But she sits too high for you !' said the miller ; 'she sits on grits, on golden grits ; you can't reach her !' 'Nothing sits so high that a man can't reach it, if he will !' said Rudy ; for he was very pert. 'But you can't reach the eaglet—you said so yourself ! Babette sits higher !' 'I will take them both !' said Rudy. 'Yes, I will give her to you, when you give me the eaglet alive !' said the miller, and laughed till the tears stood in his eyes ; 'but now I thank you for your visits, Rudy ; come again in the morning, and you will find no one at home ! Farewell, Rudy !' And Babette also said farewell, as miserable as a little kitten that can't see its mother. 'An honest

man's word is as good as his bond ! ' said Rudy. ' Don't cry, Babette ; I shall bring the eaglet ! ' ' You will break your neck, I hope ! ' said the miller, ' and so put an end to your race ! ' I call *that* a kick ! Now Rudy is off, and Babette sits and cries, but the miller sings German songs that he has learnt on his journey ! I won't grieve over that now ; it can't be helped ! "

" But yet there is still some hope for him ! " said the kitchen cat.

VII

THE EAGLE'S NEST



FROM the mountain path sounds the yodeling, merry and strong,

telling of good spirits and dauntless courage ; it is Rudy—he is going to see his friend Vesinaud.

" You will help me ! we will take Ragli with us. I must capture the eaglet up the face of the mountain ! "

"Won't you take the spots of the moon first? that is as easy!" said Vesinaud. "You are in good spirits!"

"Yes, for I am thinking of getting married! But now, to be in earnest, I will tell you what I am intending!"

And soon Vesinaud and Ragli knew what Rudy wished.

"You are a daring lad!" said they. "You will not get there! You will break your neck!"

"A man does not fall down, when he does not think of it!" said Rudy.

At midnight they set off with poles, ladders, and ropes; the way was through thickets and bushes, and over rolling stones, always up, up in the gloomy night. The water rushed below, the water murmured above, heavy clouds drove through the air. When the hunters reached the precipitous face of the mountain it was still darker, the rocky walls were almost met, and the sky could only be seen high up in a small cleft. Close by, under them, was the deep abyss with its rushing waters. All three sat quite still, waiting for daybreak, when the eagle would fly out; for they must first shoot it before they could think of taking the young one. Rudy sat down, as still as if he were a piece of the stone he sat on. He had his gun in his hand ready to shoot; his eyes were fixed on the topmost cleft, where,

under a projecting ledge, the eagle's nest was concealed.

After waiting long, the hunters heard high above them a cracking, rushing sound ; and suddenly they saw a great, hovering object. Two gun-barrels were pointed as the great black figure of



" In the black gaping depth sat the ice-maiden."

the eagle flew out of its nest. One shot was heard ; for a moment the bird moved its outstretched wings, and then slowly fell, as if with its greatness and the extension of its wings it would fill the whole of the chasm, and carry the hunters with it in its fall. The eagle sank into the depths ; and

brushing against the branches of trees and bushes, broke them as it fell.

And now the hunters began work. They tied three of the longest ladders together, setting them up from the last secure foothold at the side of the precipice. But the ladders did not quite reach ; the nest was higher up, hidden safe below the projecting rock, where it was as smooth as a wall. After some deliberation they decided to tie two ladders together, and lower them into the cleft from above, and join them to the tree which had been set up from below. With great trouble they drew up the two ladders and secured the rope ; they were then suspended over the projecting rock, and hung swinging over the abyss, and Rudy took his place on the lowest rung. It was an ice-cold morning, and vapours rose from the black chasm. Rudy sat out there as a fly sits on a waving straw which some bird has taken to the top of some high factory-chimney ; but the fly can fly away if the straw gets loose, while Rudy can only break his neck. The wind whispered about him, and below, in the abyss, rushed the hurrying water from the melting glacier, the Ice-Maiden's palace.

When Rudy began to climb, the ladders trembled and swung like a spider's web ; but when he reached the fourth ladder he found it secure, for the lashing had been well done. The topmost ladder was flattened against the rock, yet it

swung ominously with Rudy's weight. And now came the most dangerous part of the climb. But Rudy knew this, for the cat had taught him ; he did not think about Giddiness, which hovered in the air behind him, and stretched its octopus-like arms towards him. Now he stood on the highest rung of the ladder, and found that after all it did not reach high enough for him to see into the nest ; he could only reach up to it with his hands. He tested the firmness of the thick plaited boughs that supported the lower part of the nest, and when he found a thick and firm bough, he pulled himself up by it till he got his head and chest over the nest. But there poured upon him an overpowering smell of carrion ; putrefying lambs, chamois, and birds lay here torn to pieces. Giddiness which was not able to reach him, puffed the poisonous exhalation into his face, to confuse him, and below, in the black gaping depth, over the hurrying water, sat the Ice-Maiden herself, with her long greenish hair, staring with deathly eyes like two gun-barrels, and saying to herself, " Now I shall capture you ! "

In a corner of the nest he saw a large and powerful eaglet, which could not yet fly. Rudy fastened his eyes on it, held himself with all the force of one hand, and cast, with the other hand, a noose over the young bird. Thus, with its legs entangled in the line, it was captured alive. Rudy threw the noose with the bird in it over his shoulder, so

that it hung a good way below him, and by the help of a rope he made himself fast till his toes reached the highest rung of the ladder.

"Hold fast! don't believe you will fall, and you won't fall!" this was his old lesson, and he stuck to it; he held fast, he scrambled, he was certain he should not fall, and he did not fall.

And now was heard a yodel, so vigorous and joyful. Rudy stood on the firm rock with his eaglet.

VIII



HERE is what you demanded!" said Rudy, entering the miller's house at Bex; and, setting on the floor a large basket, he took off the

cloth, and there glared from it two yellow, black-rimmed eyes, so sparkling, so wild, that they seemed to burn and devour everything they saw; the short, strong beak gaped, ready to bite, the neck was red and downy,

"The eaglet!" shouted the miller. Babette gave one scream, and sprang aside, but she could not turn her eyes away from Rudy, or the eaglet.

"You are not to be frightened!" said the miller.

"And you always keep your word!" said Rudy; "each has his own characteristic!"

"But how is it you did not break your neck?" inquired the miller.

"Because I held fast!" answered Rudy, "and that I do still! I hold fast to Babette!"

"First see that you have her!" said the miller with a laugh; and that was a good sign, Babette knew.

"Let us get the eaglet out of the basket; it looks dangerous. How it stares! How did you catch it?"

And Rudy had to tell them, and the miller stared, opening his eyes wider and wider.

"With your boldness and luck you can maintain three wives!" said the miller.

"Thank you! thank you!" cried Rudy.

"Yes; still you have not got Babette!" said the miller, and jestingly slapped the young hunter on the shoulder.

"Have you heard the news in the mill?" said the parlour cat to the kitchen cat. "Rudy has brought us the eaglet, and will take Babette in exchange. They have kissed each other and let

father see it ! That is as good as an engagement. The old man didn't kick ; he drew in his claws, and took his nap after dinner, and let the two sit and wag their tails. They have so much to say, they won't be finished before Christmas."

Nor had they finished before Christmas. The wind scattered the brown leaves, the snow drifted



" Rudy and Babette."

in the valley and on the high mountains. The Ice-Maiden sat in her noble palace, which grows in the winter ; the rocky walls were coated with ice, there were icicles ponderous as elephants where in the summer the mountain-torrent poured its watery deluge ; ice-garlands of fantastic ice-

crystals glittered on the snow-powdered fir trees. The Ice-Maiden rode on the whistling wind across the deepest valleys. The snow carpet was spread quite down to Bex, and she could come there and see Rudy within doors, more than he was accustomed to, for he sat with Babette. The marriage was to take place towards the summer ; he often had a ringing in his ears, so frequently did his friends talk of it. There was summer, glowing with the most beautiful alpine roses, the merry, laughing Babette, beautiful as spring, the spring that makes all the birds sing of summer and of weddings.

“ How can those two sit and hang over each other ? ” said the parlour cat. “ I am now quite tired of their mewling ! ”

IX

THE ICE-MAIDEN



HE walnuts and chestnut trees all hung with the green garlands of spring, spread from the bridge at St. Maurice to the margin of the Lake of Geneva along the Rhone, which with violent speed rushes from its source under the green glacier — the ice palace, where the Ice-Maiden lives, whence she flies on the wind to the highest snow-field, and there, in the strong sunlight, stretches herself on her drifting bed. And as she sits there she looks with far-seeing glance into the deepest valleys, where men, like ants on a sunlit stone, busily move about.

“Powerful Spirits, as the Children of the Sun call you!” said the Ice-Maiden, “you are creeping things! with a rolling snow-ball both you and your houses and towns are crushed and effaced!” And she raised her proud head higher, and looked about her and deep down with deathly eyes. But from the valley was heard a rumbling, blasting of the rocks; men were at work; roads and tunnels were being made for railways.

“They play like moles!” said she; “they are

digging passages, therefore I hear sounds like musket-shots. When I move my castle the sound is louder than the rolling of thunder !”

From the valley arose a smoke, which moved onward like a flickering veil ; it was the flying plume from a locomotive, which was drawing a train on the recently opened railway, the winding serpent, whose joints are the carriages.

“ They play at masters down below, the Powerful Spirits !” said the Ice-Maiden. “ Yet the powers of nature are mightier !” and she laughed and sang, and the valleys resounded.

“ Now there is an avalanche rolling !” said the men below.

But the Children of the Sun sang yet higher of human ideas, the powerful means which subdue the sea, remove mountains, fill up valleys ; human ideas, they are the lords of the powers of nature. At the same moment there came over the snow-field, where the Ice-Maiden sat, a party of mountain climbers ; they had bound themselves to one another with cords for greater security on the smooth plain of ice, near the deep precipices.

“ Creeping things !” said she. “ You the lords of nature !” and she turned herself away from them and looked mockingly down into the deep valley, where the railway train was rushing past.

“ There they sit, these *thinkers* ! they sit in their power ! I see them all ! One sits proud as a king, alone ! there they sit in a cluster ! there

half of them are asleep ! and when the steam dragon stops they get out, and go their way. The thinkers go out into the world ! ” And she laughed.

“ There is an avalanche rolling again ! ” said those down below in the valley.

“ It will not reach us ! ” said two people behind the steam dragon ; “ two souls with one thought,” as they say. It was Rudy and Babette ; the miller also was with them.

“ As luggage ! ” said he. “ I am with them as something necessary ! ”

“ There sit those two ! ” said the Ice-Maiden. “ Many chamois have I crushed, millions of alpine roses have I snapped and broken, not leaving the roots ! I will blot them out ! Thinkers ! Powerful Spirits ! ” And she laughed.

“ There's an avalanche rolling again ! ” said those down below in the valley.

X
THE GODMOTHER

THE Montreux, one of the nearest towns which, with Clarens, Vernex, and Glion, form a garland at the north-eastern end of the Lake of Geneva, lived Babette's godmother, an English lady of position, with her daughters and a young relative; they had recently arrived, but the miller had already paid them a visit, told them of Babette's engagement, and of Rudy and the eaglet, and of his visit to Interlaken—in short, the whole history—and they had been highly delighted and pleased with Rudy and Babette, and with the miller; and at last made them all three come, and so they came—Babette must see her godmother, the godmother see Babette.

Near the little town of Villeneuve, at the end of the Lake of Geneva, lay the steamboat which in its half-hour's journey to Vernex lies under Montreux. This is a shore which poets have praised; here, under the walnut-trees, on the deep blue-green lake, sat Byron, and wrote his melodious lines on the prisoner in the Castle of Chillon. Yonder, where Clarens is reflected with its weeping

willows in the lake, wandered Rousseau, dreaming of Heloïse. The river Rhone glides forth under the high, snow-capped mountains of Savoy ; here lies, not far from its outlet in the lake, a little island—indeed, it is so small that from the shore it seems to be a boat out there ; it is a rock which, more than a hundred years ago, a lady had surrounded with a stone wall, covered with soil, and planted with three acacia-trees, which now overshadow the whole island. Babette was quite enraptured with the little spot—it was to her the most charming in the whole voyage ; she thought they ought to stay there, for it was a most delightful place. But the steamboat passed by it, and stopped, as it always did, at Vernex.

The little company wandered hence between the white, sunlit walls which enclosed the vineyards about the little mountain town of Montreux, where fig-trees cast a shade in front of the peasants' cottages, and laurels and cypresses grow in the gardens. Half-way up stood the boarding-house where the godmother was living.

They were very cordially received. The godmother was a tall, kind lady with a round, smiling face ; as a child she must have been like one of Raphael's angel heads, but now she was an old angel head, as her silvery hair was quite curly. The daughters were handsome, delicate-looking, all, and slim. The young cousin, who was with them, was entirely dressed in white from top to

toe, with yellow hair and whiskers, of which he had so much that it might have been divided between three gentlemen, and he at once paid great attention to little Babette.

Handsomely bound books, pieces of music, and drawings were spread over the large table, the balcony doors stood open overlooking the beautiful, extensive lake, which was so bright and still that the mountains of Savoy, with the country towns, woods, and snowy tops, were all reflected in it.

Rudy, who was always bold, lively, and confident, felt himself out of his element, as they say ; and he moved about as if he were walking on peas on a smooth floor. How slowly the hours passed ! as if on the treadmill. And now they went for a walk, and it was just as tedious ; Rudy might have taken two steps forward and then one back, and still kept pace with the others. They walked down to Chillon, the old gloomy castle on the rock, to see the instruments of torture, and death-chambers, the rusty chains on the rocky walls, the stony bed for those sentenced to death, the trap-doors through which the unfortunate beings were precipitated downwards and impaled on the iron spikes amidst the surf. They called it delightful to see all this. It was a place of execution, elevated by Byron's song into the world of poetry. Rudy felt it altogether the scene of executions, he leaned against the great stone window-frames

and looked into that deep, bluish green water, and over to the little solitary island with the three acacias ; he wished himself there, and away from the whole chattering party ; but Babette felt herself particularly cheerful. She said she had been unusually entertained ; she found the cousin perfect.

“ Yes, a perfect chatterbox ! ” said Rudy ; and it was the first time that Rudy said anything which displeased her. The Englishman had presented her with a little book as a memento of Chillon ; it was a French version of Byron's poem, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, which Babette could read.

“ The book may be good enough,” said Rudy, “ but I don't care for the much-combed fellow who gave it you.”

“ He seemed to me like a meal-sack without any meal ! ” said the miller, laughing at his own wit. Rudy also laughed, and said that it was very well put.

XI
THE COUSIN

FEW days later, when Rudy came to call at the mill, he found the young Englishman there. Babette was just offering him some boiled trout, which she herself must have garnished with parsley, it looked so dainty. That was quite unnecessary. What business had the Englishman here? What did he come for? To enjoy refreshments from the hands of Babette? Rudy was jealous, and that amused Babette; it gratified her to get a glimpse of all sides of his disposition, both strong and weak. Love was as yet but play to her, and she played with Rudy's whole heart; and though,

as one may say, he was her happiness, the chief thought of her life, the best and grandest in the world; yes—but the more gloomy did he look, so much the more did her eyes laugh; she could almost have kissed the blonde Englishman with

the yellow whiskers, if by that means she could succeed in sending Rudy fuming away, for by that she would know how she was beloved by him. But this was not right or prudent of little Babette, only she was no more than nineteen. She did not think much of it ; she thought still less how she could explain her conduct, which was more free and easy with the young Englishman than was suitable for the miller's modest and recently betrothed daughter.

The mill was situated where the highroad from Bex runs under the snow-covered peak which the country people call the Diablerets, not far from a rapid, greyish-white mountain stream, like foaming soap-suds. This did not drive the mill ; it was driven by a lesser stream, which was precipitated from the rock on the other side of the river, and was dammed up by a stone wall so as to increase its force and headway, and carried into a closed wooden basin by a broad channel away over the rapid river. This channel was so abundantly supplied with water that it overflowed, and made a wet, slippery path for those who used it as a short cut to the mill. The idea occurred to the young Englishman to use it, and dressed in white, like a working miller, he clambered over in the evening, guided by the light shining from Babette's room. But he had not learnt to climb, and nearly went head-foremost into the stream, but escaped with wet sleeves and

bespattered trousers. Muddy and dirty he came below Babette's windows, clambered up into the old lime-tree and imitated the call of an owl, for he could not sing like any other bird. Babette heard it, and peeped through her thin curtains ; but when she saw the white man, and easily guessed who it was, her little heart beat with fright and with resentment. She hastily put out her light, saw that all the window-bolts were fastened, and left him to hoot.

It would be terrible if Rudy were now in the mill, but Rudy was not in the mill ; no, what was much worse, he was just below it. There was high talk, angry words ; there would be fighting, perhaps murder.

Babette opened her window in alarm, called Rudy's name, and told him to go away.

"You will not let me stay !" he shouted ; "then it is an appointment ! You are expecting good friends, better than me ! Shame on you, Babette !"

"You are detestable !"



"Peeped through the curtains."

said Babette ; " I hate you ! " and now she was crying. " Go ! go ! "

" I have not deserved this treatment ! " said he, and he went ; his cheeks were like fire, his heart was like fire.

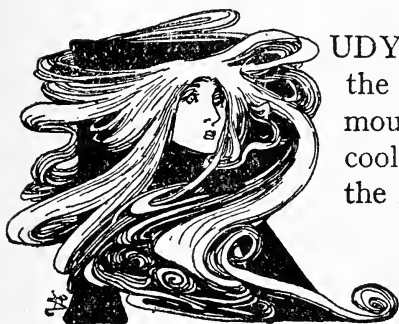
Babette flung herself on her bed, and wept.

" I love you so much, Rudy ! and you can believe that of me ! "

And she was angry, very angry, and that did her good, for otherwise she would have been deeply grieved ; now she could fall asleep and sleep the invigorating sleep of youth.

XII

THE POWERS OF EVIL



UDY left Bex, and took the homeward path up the mountains, in the fresh, cooling air, the domain of the Ice-Maiden. The thick foliage of the trees deep below him looked as if they were potato plants ; the firs and the bushes appeared even less, the Alpine roses bloomed near the snow, which lay in separate patches as if it were linen put out

to bleach. There was a single blue gentian, and he crushed it with the butt-end of his gun.

Higher up he saw two chamois. Rudy's eyes sparkled, his thoughts took a new flight ; but he was not near enough to them for him to shoot with confidence ; so he climbed higher, where only coarse grass grew among the blocks of stone. the chamois went placidly along the snow-fields. Rudy hurried on eagerly, surrounded by misty clouds, and on a sudden he stood in front of a precipitous rocky wall, and the rain began to fall in torrents.

He felt a parching thirst, his head was hot, but his limbs were cold. He seized his hunting-flask, but it was empty ; he had not thought of it when he rushed up the mountain. He had never been ill, but now he had a presentiment of it ; he was tired, he felt a desire to throw himself down and go to sleep, but everything was streaming with water. Strange objects vibrated before his eyes, but he saw on a sudden, what he had never seen there before, a newly-built low house, leaning against the rock, and at the door stood a young maiden. He thought it was the schoolmaster's Annette, whom he once had kissed at a dance, but it was not Annette, and yet he had seen her before, perhaps near Grindelwald, that night when he went home from the shooting match at Interlaken.

"Where do you come from ?" he demanded.

"I am at home!" said she. "I am watching my flock."

"Your flock! Where do they graze? Here is only snow and rocks!"

"You are very clever!" said she with a laugh. "Here behind us, lower down, is a beautiful

meadow! that is where my goats go. I take good care of them! I don't lose one; what is mine remains mine!"

"You are brave!" said Rudy.

"You also!" replied she.

"Have you any milk? Pray give me some, for I am intolerably thirsty!"

"I have something better than milk!" said she, "that you shall have! Yesterday some travellers came



"Held the bowl to his lips."

here with their guide ; they forgot half a bottle of wine, such as you have never tasted ; they will not fetch it, and I don't drink it, so you can have it."

And she came out with the wine, poured it into a wooden bowl, and gave it to Rudy.

"That is good !" said he. "I have never tasted any wine so warming and fiery !" and his eyes sparkled, and there came an animation, a glow into him, as if all sorrow and depression had evaporated ; and the gushing, fresh human nature coursed through his veins.

"But this is surely the schoolmaster's Annette !" he exclaimed. "Give me a kiss !"

"Then give me the pretty ring you have on your finger !"

"My engagement ring ?"

"Exactly so !" said the girl ; and she poured wine into the bowl, and held it to his lips, and he drank it. The joy of living was in his blood, he felt as if all the world belonged to him, and why should he worry ? Everything is for us to enjoy and to make us happy ! The stream of life is a stream of joy ; to ride on it, to let ourselves float on its surface, that is felicity ! He looked at the young girl : it was Annette, and still it was not Annette ; even less was it the goblin phantom, as he had called her, he met near Grindelwald. The girl here on the mountain was fresh as the new-fallen snow, blooming as an Alpine rose,

and nimble as a kid, but still formed out of Adam's ribs, as human as Rudy. And he put his arms around her, and gazed into her wonderfully clear eyes. It was only for a second, and in this—who can explain it? was it the spirit of life or of death that filled him?—was he raised on high, or did



"The Ice-Maiden gave him a kiss."

he sink down into the deep, murderous abyss of ice, deeper, ever deeper? He saw the walls of ice like blue-green glass; endless crevasses gaped around him, and water dripped sounding like chimes, and gleaming like pearls in bluish-white flames. The Ice-Maiden gave him a kiss, and it chilled

him through his backbone and into his brain. He gave one cry of pain, dragged himself away, stumbled and fell, and it was night before his eyes. The powers of evil had played their game.

When he reopened his eyes the Alpine maiden was gone, as was also the sheltering cottage. Water drove down the bare rocky wall, the snow lay all round him ; Rudy shivered with cold, he was soaked to the skin, and his ring was gone, his engagement ring which Babette had given him. His gun lay by him in the snow ; he took it up and wished to discharge it, but it missed fire. Watery clouds lay like solid masses of snow in the crevasse ; Giddiness sat there and lured on her helpless prey, and under her there was a sound in the deep crevasse as if a huge rock were falling, crushing and sweeping away everything that would stop it in its fall.

But in the mill Babette sat weeping. Rudy had not been near her for six days—he who was in the wrong, he who ought to ask her forgiveness, because she loved him with her whole heart.

XIII

IN THE MILLER'S HOUSE



“THAT horrid nonsense it is with these human beings!” said the parlour cat to the kitchen cat. “Now it is broken off again with Babette and Rudy. She is crying, and he does not think any more of her.”

“I can’t endure that,” said the kitchen cat.

“No more can I,” said the parlour cat, “but I won’t grieve over it! Babette may now be the beloved of the red whiskers! but he has not been here since he wished to get on the roof.”

The powers of evil have their game, both without us and within us. This Rudy had discovered and thought over. What was it that had taken place about him and in him on the top of the mountain? Was it a vision, or a feverish dream? Never before had he known fever or illness. He had made an examination of his own heart when he judged Babette. Could he confess to Babette the thoughts which assailed him in the hour of temptation? He had lost her ring, and it was exactly in that loss that she had regained him.

Would she confess to him? It seemed as if his heart would burst asunder when he thought of her; there arose within him so many memories; he seemed really to see her, laughing like a merry child. Many an affectionate word she had spoken in the abundance of her heart came like a gleam of sunshine into his breast, and soon it was all sunshine therein for Babette.

She might be able to confess to him, and she ought to do so.

He went to the mill, and confessed, beginning with a kiss, and ending in the admission that he was the offender. It was a great offence in



"Therefore Babette lectured him."

him that he could distrust Babette's fidelity ; it was almost unpardonable ! Such distrust, such impetuosity might bring them both to grief. Yes, indeed ! and therefore Babette lectured him, and she was pleased with herself, and it suited her so well. But in one thing Rudy was right—godmother's relation was a chatter box ! She wished to burn the book which he had given her, and not have the least thing in her possession that could remind her of him.

"Now that's all over !" said the parlour cat. "Rudy is here again, they understand each other, and that is the greatest good fortune, they say."

"I heard in the night," said the kitchen cat, "the rats say the greatest good fortune is to eat tallow-candles and to have quite enough rancid bacon. Now, which shall I believe—rats, or a pair of lovers ?"

"Neither of them !" said the parlour cat. "That is always safest."

The greatest good fortune for Rudy and Babette was close at hand ; the wedding day—the most beautiful day, as they called it.

But the marriage was not to take place at the church at Bex, or in the miller's house ; the godmother wished the wedding to be held at her house, and that they should be married in the pretty little church at Montreux. The miller stuck to it that this request should be complied with ; he alone was aware what the godmother

intended to give the bride for a wedding present, and considered they ought to make so slight a concession. The day was fixed. On the previous evening they were to journey to Villeneuve, and to proceed in the early morning to Montreux by boat, that the godmother's daughters might deck the bride.

"There will be a feast here the day after the wedding," said the parlour cat. "Otherwise I would not give one mew for the lot."

"There *will* be a feast!" said the kitchen cat; "ducks and pigeons are killed, and a whole deer hangs on the wall. It makes my mouth water to look at it! In the morning they start on their journey."

Yes, in the morning! This evening Rudy and Babette sat together, as betrothed, for the last time at the mill.

Out of doors was the Alpine glow, the evening bells chimed, the daughters of the sunbeams sang: "May the best thing happen!"

XIV

VISIONS IN THE NIGHT



HE sun was set, the clouds came down in the Rhone valley between the high mountains, the wind blew from the south, a wind from Africa, but, over the high Alps, a tempest, rending the clouds asunder, and, when the wind had swept by, for one instant it was quite still; the torn clouds hung in fantastic shapes among the tree-clad mountains, and over the rushing Rhone; they hung in shapes like Antediluvian monsters, like eagles hovering in the air and like frogs leaping in a pool; they came down over the rapid stream, they sailed over it although they sailed in the air. The river bore on its surface a pine-tree torn up by the roots, watery eddies flowed before it; that was Giddiness—there were more than one—moving in a circle on the onward-rushing stream. The moon shone on the snow-covered mountain tops, on the black woods and the strange white clouds, visions of night, spirits of the powers of nature; the mountain peasants saw them through the windows, they

sailed below in crowds before the Ice-Maiden, who came from her glacier palace, and sat on her frail craft, the uprooted pine tree, carrying the glacier water with her down the stream to the open lake.

"The wedding guests are coming!" That was what whistled and sang in the air and the water.

There were visions without and visions within. Babette dreamed a strange dream.

It appeared to her as if she was married to Rudy, and that many years had passed. He was now hunting cha-mois, but she was at home, and there sat with her the



"Only his hunting-jacket and hat."

young Englishman with the yellow whiskers. His glances were warm, his words had a power of witchcraft; he held out his hands to her, and she was obliged to follow him. They left her home and went down the mountain, ever down, and it seemed to Babette as if there lay a burden on her heart, which was always growing heavier. It was a sin against Rudy, a sin against God. And then on a sudden she was standing deserted; her clothes were torn by the thorns, her hair was grey. She looked up in her grief, and on the edge of a cliff she saw Rudy. She held out her arms towards him, but did not venture to call or pray. Nor would it have helped her, for she quickly saw that it was not he, but only his hunting-jacket and hat, which were hanging on his alpenstock, as hunters set them to deceive the chamois. And in the depth of her affliction Babette wailed out: "Oh, that I had died on the day I was married, the day of my greatest happiness! that would have been a happy life! that would have been the best thing that could happen for me and Rudy! None knows his future!" and in her impious grief she precipitated herself into a deep chasm in the rocks. The spell was broken, and with a cry she awoke.

The dream had vanished, but she knew that she had dreamed something dreadful, and that she had dreamed of the young Englishman, whom she had not seen or thought of for several months.

Was he in Montreux? Was she about to see him at the wedding? Her pretty lips tightened at the thought, and she knit her brows. But soon there came a smile, and her eyes gleamed; the sun was shining so beautifully outside, and the morning was that of her wedding with Rudy.

He was already in the parlour when she came down, and soon they were away to Villeneuve. They were a very happy couple; and the miller with them laughed and beamed in the highest spirits; he was a good father and an upright man.

"Now we are the masters at home!" said the parlour cat.

XV CONCLUSION



It was not yet evening when the three happy people reached Villeneuve, and sat down to their repast. After dinner the miller sat in an easy chair with his pipe, and took a little nap. The young couple went arm in arm out of the

town, then by the carriage road under the rocks so thick with bushes, skirting the deep bluish-green lake. The gloomy Chillon reflected its grey walls and massive towers in the clear water; the little island with the three acacia trees lay still nearer, appearing like a bouquet in the lake.

"It must be delightful out there!" said Babette; she had still the strongest inclination to go there, and that wish could be immediately fulfilled: there lay a boat by the bank, the line that held it was easy to unfasten. They could not see any one from whom to ask permission, and so they took the boat, for Rudy could row well.

The oars caught hold of the water like the fins of a fish, the water that is so pliable and yet so strong, that is all a back to bear, all a mouth to devour, mildly smiling, softness itself, and yet overwhelming and strong to rend asunder. The water foamed in the wake of the boat, in which in a few minutes the couple had gained the island, where they landed. There was not more than room enough on it for two to dance.

Rudy turned Babette round two or three times, and then, hand in hand, they seated themselves on the little bench beneath the overhanging acacias, and gazed into each other's eyes, while all around them was illuminated in the splendour of the setting sun. The pine forests on the mountains put on a lilac hue like heather when in flower, and where the

trees ceased and the bare rock came into view it glowed as if the mountain was transparent ; the clouds in the heavens were lighted up as if with red fire, the whole lake was like a fresh, blushing rose-leaf. Already, as the shadows lifted themselves up to the snow-clad hills of Savoy, they became bluish, but the topmost peaks shone as if of red lava, and for one moment looked as if these glowing masses had raised themselves from the bowels of the earth and were not yet extinguished. That was an Alpine glow, such as Rudy and Babette could never hope to see the equal of. The snow-covered Dent du Midi had a splendour like the face of the full moon when it is rising.

“ So much beauty ! so much happiness ! ” they both said.

“ The earth has no more to give me ! ” said Rudy. “ An evening hour like this is a whole lifetime ! How often have I felt my good fortune as I feel it now, and thought, ‘ If all were now ended, how fortunately I should have lived ! How blessed is this world ! ’ and the day ended ; but a new one began again, and it seemed to me that it was fairer still ! Heaven is infinitely good, Babette ! ”

“ I am so happy ! ” said she.

“ Earth has nothing more to give me ! ” exclaimed Rudy.

And the evening bells chimed from the mountains of Savoy, from the mountains of Switzerland ;

the dark blue Jura lifted itself towards the west in a golden lustre.

"God give thee what is grandest and best!" exclaimed Babette.

"That He will!" said Rudy. "To-morrow



"Hand in hand, seated on the little bench."

I shall have it! to-morrow thou wilt be mine! my own little, charming wife!"

"The boat!" cried Babette at that moment.

The boat, which was to take them back, had broken loose and drifted from the island.

"I will fetch it!" said Rudy, throwing off his coat; and he pulled off his boots, sprang into the lake, and took rapid strokes towards the boat.

Cold and deep was the clear, bluish-green water from the mountain glacier. Rudy looked down below, only one single glance—and he thought he saw a golden ring rolling, and gleaming, and playing—he thought of his lost betrothal ring, and the ring became larger, and expanded into a sparkling circle, and in that shone the clear glacier; interminable deep crevasses yawned around him, and the dripping water sounded like a carillon of bells and gleamed with bluish flames; in an instant he saw what we have to tell in so many words. Young huntsmen and young maidens, men and women, once swallowed up in the crevasses of the glacier, stood here alive, with open eyes and smiling mouth, and deep under them came the sound of church bells from submerged towns; a congregation knelt under the church arches, pieces of ice formed the organ-pipes, mountain torrents played on it. The Ice-Maiden sat on the clear, transparent floor; she raised herself up towards Rudy, kissed his feet, and there ran a deadly coldness through his limbs, an electric shock—ice and fire! one does not know the difference at the first touch.

"Mine! mine!" sounded about him and in him. "I kissed thee when thou wast little! I kissed thee on the mouth! now I kiss thee on

the toe and on the heel—thou art mine altogether ! ”

And he was lost in the clear blue water.

All was still ; the church bells ceased to ring,



“ The ring expanded into a sparkling circle.”

the last notes died away with the splendour on the red clouds. “ Mine thou art ! ” sounded again in the depths ; “ Mine thou art ! ” sounded in the heights, from the Infinite.

The icy kiss of Death overcame that which was

corruptible ; the prelude was over before the drama of life could begin, the discord resolved into harmony.

It is beautiful to fly from love to Love, from earth into the Heaven.

Do you call that a sad story ?

Unfortunate Babette ! it was a fearful time for her ! the boat drifted farther and farther away. No one on shore knew that the bridal pair were on the little island. Night drew on ; the clouds descended, and it became dark. She stood there alone, despairing, weeping. A furious storm broke over her ; lightning illuminated the mountains of Jura, Switzerland, and Savoy, and thunder rolled continuously. The lightning was almost as bright as the sun ; one could see each single vine as at mid-day, and then immediately everything would be shrouded in the thickest darkness. The flashes formed knots, rings, zig-zags ; they struck round about the lake, they shone from all sides, while the peals were increased by the echoes. On the land people drew the boats higher up the banks ; every living thing sought shelter, and the rain poured down in torrents.

"Wherever are Rudy and Babette in this furious storm ?" said the miller.

Babette sat with clasped hands, with her head in her lap, speechless with grief.

"In that deep water !" she said within herself.

"He is deep down, as under the glacier !"

And she remembered what Rudy had told her of his mother's death, of his own rescue, and how he had been brought up as one dead out of the crevasse in the glacier. "The Ice-Maiden has him again!"

And the lightning flashed as blinding as a ray of the sun on the white snow. Babette started; the lake lifted itself at that instant, like a shining glacier; the Ice-Maiden stood there, majestic, pale blue, shining, and at her feet lay Rudy's corpse. "Mine!" said she; and round about was again darkness and gloom, and rushing water.

"Cruel!" moaned Babette. "Why then should he die, when the happy day was come! O God! enlighten my understanding! shine into my heart! I cannot understand Thy ways, but I bow to Thy power and wisdom!"

And God shone into her heart. A flash of thought, a ray of light, her dream of last night, as if it were real, seemed to shine through her; she called to mind the words which she had spoken: she had wished for *the best thing* for herself and Rudy.

"Woe is me! was that the seed of sin in my heart? was my dream a future life, whose string must be snapped for my salvation? Miserable me!"

She sat wailing in the gloomy, dark night. In the deep stillness she thought that Rudy's words sounded again, the last he had uttered: "Earth

has nothing more to give me !” They had been said in the abundance of happiness, they came back to her in the depth of her grief.

* * * *

A couple of years have elapsed. The lake smiles, the banks smile ; the vines put forth swelling grapes ; steamboats with waving flags hurry past, pleasure-boats with both their sails set fly like white butterflies over the expanse of water ; the railway above Chillon has been opened, and leads deep into the Rhone valley. At every station visitors get out ; they come with their red guide-books and read to themselves what remarkable things they have to see. They visit Chillon, they see from thence in the lake the little island with the three acacias, and read in the book of a bridal pair who, in the year 1856, sailed thither one evening, of the bridegroom’s death, and : “ next morning the bride’s despairing cry was first heard on the shore.”

But the guide-books make no mention of Babette’s quiet life with her father, not in the mill—strangers live there—but in the pretty house near the railway station, where from the windows she often looks out in the afternoon over the chestnut trees to the snow mountains where Rudy used to disport himself ; she sees in the evenings the Alpine glow, the Children of the Sun encamping above and repeating the song of the traveller whose

mantle the whirlwind carried away ; it took the covering, but not the man himself.

There is a rosy lustre on the snow of the mountains, there is a rosy lustre in every heart where the thought is : " God lets that which is best come to pass ! " but that is not always revealed to us as it was to Babette in her dream.



The Storks

IN the last house in a little village there lay a stork's nest. The mother stork sat in the nest, beside her four little ones, who were stretching forth their heads with their little black bills, that had not yet turned red. At a short distance, on the top of the roof, stood the father stork, as stiff and bolt upright as well could be. He had drawn up one leg under him, in order not to remain quite idle while he stood sentry. One might have taken him to be carved out of wood, so motionless was he. "It no doubt looks very grand for my wife to have a sentinel by her nest!" thought he. "They can't know that I am her husband, and they will, of course, conclude that I have been commanded to stand here. It looks so noble!" And he continued standing on one leg.

A whole swarm of children were playing in the

street below ; and when they perceived the stork, the forwardest of the boys sang the old song about the stork, in which the others soon joined. Only each sang it just as he happened to recollect it :—

“Stork, stork, fly home and rest,
Nor on one leg thus sentry keep !
Your wife is sitting in her nest,
To lull her little ones to sleep.
There's a halter for one,
There's a stake for another ;
For a third there's a gun,
And a spit for his brother ! ”

“ Only listen to what the boys are singing ! ” said the young storks. “ They say we shall be hanged and burned.”

“ You shouldn't mind what they say,” said the mother stork ; “ if you don't listen, it won't hurt you.”

But the boys went on singing, and pointing at the stork with their fingers. Only one boy, whose name was Peter, said it was a shame to make game of animals, and would not join the rest. The mother stork comforted her young ones. “ Don't trouble your heads about it,” said she ; “ only see how quiet your father stands, and that on one leg ! ”

“ We are frightened ! ” said the young ones, drawing back their heads into the nest.

Next day, when the children had again assembled

to play, they no sooner saw the storks than they began their song :—

“ There’s a halter for one,
There’s a stake for another.”

“ Are we to be hanged and burned ? ” asked the young storks.



“ ‘ Stork, stork, fly home and rest. ’ ”

“ No ; to be sure not,” said the mother. “ You shall learn how to fly, and I’ll train you. Then we will fly to the meadows, and pay a visit to the frogs, who will bow to us in the water, and sing ‘ Croak ! croak ! ’ And then we’ll eat them up, and that will be a right good treat ! ”

“ And what next ? ” asked the youngsters.

“ Then all the storks in the land will assemble,

and the autumn manœuvres will begin ; and every one must know how to fly properly, for that is very important. For whoever does not fly as he ought is pierced to death by the general's beak ; therefore, mind you learn something when the drilling begins."

"Then we shall be spitted after all, as the boys said—and hark ! they are singing it again."

"Attend to me, and not to them," said the mother stork. "After the principal review we shall fly to the warm countries, far from here, over hills and forests. We fly to Egypt, where there are three-cornered stone houses, one point of which reaches to the clouds—they are called pyramids, and are older than a stork can well imagine. And in that same land there is a river which overflows its banks, and turns the whole country into mire. We then go into the mire and eat frogs."

"O—oh !" exclaimed all the youngsters.

"It is a delightful place, truly ! One can eat all day long, and while we are feasting there, in this country there is not a green leaf left upon the trees. It is so cold here that the very clouds freeze in lumps, and fall down in little rags." It was snow she meant, only she could not explain it better.

"Will the naughty boys freeze in lumps ?" asked the young storks.

"No, they will not freeze in lumps, but they will be very near doing so, and they will be obliged

to sit moping in a gloomy room, while you will be flying about in foreign lands, where there are flowers and warm sunshine."

Some time had now passed by, and the young ones had grown so big that they could stand upright in the nest, and look all about them ; and the father stork came every day with nice frogs, little serpents, and all such dainties as storks delight in, that he could find. And how funny it was to see all the clever feats he performed to amuse them ! He would lay his head right round upon his tail ; then he would clatter with his bill just like a little rattle ; and then he would tell them stories, all relating to swamps and fens.

"Come, you must now learn to fly," said the mother stork one day, and the four youngsters were all obliged to come out on the top of the roof. How they did stagger ! They tried to poise themselves with their wings, but they had nearly fallen to the ground below.

"Look at me," said the mother. "This is the way to hold your head ! And you must place your feet so ! Left ! right ! Left ! right ! That's what will help you forward in the world."

She then flew a little way, and the young ones took a little leap without assistance—but plump ! down they fell, for their bodies were still too heavy.

"I won't fly !" said one youngster, creeping back into the nest. "I don't care about going to warm countries."

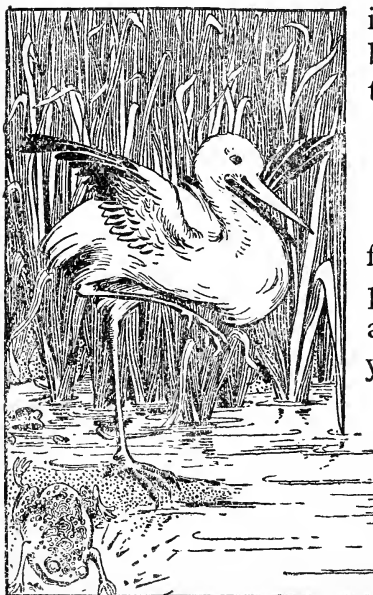
"Would you like to stay and freeze here in the winter, and wait till the boys come to hang, to burn, or to roast you? Well, then, I'll call them."

"Oh, no!" said the young stork, hopping back to the roof like the others. On the third day they already began to fly a little, and then they fancied they should be able at once to hover in the air, up-borne by their wings, and this they accordingly attempted, when down they fell, and were then obliged to flap their wings as quick as they could. The

boys now came into the street below, singing their song:—

"Stork, stork, fly home and rest."

"Shan't we fly down and peck them?" asked the young ones.



"We then go into the mire and eat frogs."

"No ; leave them alone," said the mother. "Attend to me— that's far more important—one—two—three ! Now let's fly round to the right. One—two—three ! now to the left, round the chimney. Now that was very well ! That last flap of your wings was so graceful and so proper, that you shall have leave to fly with me to-morrow to the marsh. Several genteel families of storks are coming thither with their children ; now let me see that mine are the best bred of all, and mind you strut about with a due degree of pride, for that looks well, and makes one respected."

"But shan't we take revenge on the naughty boys ?" asked the young storks.

"Let them scream away as much as they like. You can fly up to the clouds, and go to the land of the Pyramids, while they are freezing, and can neither see a green leaf nor eat a sweet apple."

"But we wish to be revenged," whispered the young ones amongst each other ; and then they were drilled again.

Of all the boys in the street, none seemed more bent on singing the song that made game of the storks than the one who had first introduced it ; and he was a little fellow, scarcely more than six years old. The young storks, to be sure, fancied that he was at least a hundred, because he was so much bigger than their parents ; and besides, what did they know about the ages of children or of grown men ? So their whole vengeance was to be aimed



"The four youngsters were all obliged to come out on the top of the roof."

at this boy, because he had been the first to begin, and had always persisted in mocking at them. The young storks were very much exasperated, and when they grew bigger, they grew still less patient of insults, and their mother was at length obliged to promise that they should be revenged, but only on the day of their departure.

"We must first see how you will acquit yourselves at the great review. If you don't do your duty properly, and the general runs his beak through your chests, then the boys will be in the right—at least, so far. So we must wait and see."

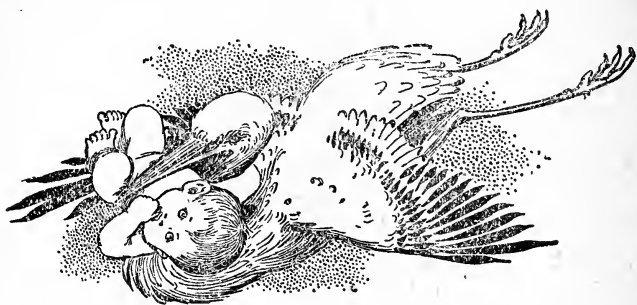
"Yes, you shall see," said the youngsters; and they took a deal of pains, and practised every day, till they flew so elegantly and so lightly that it was a pleasure to see them.

The autumn now set in, when all the storks began to assemble and to start for the warm countries, leaving winter behind them. And there were



"A little fellow, scarcely more than six years old."

evolutions for you ! The young fledglings were set to fly over forests and villages, to see whether they could acquit themselves properly, for they had a long voyage before them. But the young storks gave such proof of capacity, that their certificate ran as follows :—" Remarkably well—with the present of a frog and a serpent." This was the most palpable proof of the satisfaction they had given ; and they might now eat the frog



" ' Now we'll fly to the pond, and fetch one for every child.' "

and the serpent, which they lost no time in doing.

" Now for our revenge ! " said they.

" Yes, assuredly," said the mother stork ;
" and I have found out what would be the fairest revenge to take. I know where lies the pond in which all the little human children are waiting till the storks shall come and bring them to their parents. The prettiest little children lie sleeping there, and dreaming far more sweetly than they will ever dream hereafter. Most parents wish for

such a little infant, and most children wish for a sister or a brother. Now we'll fly to the pond, and fetch one for every child who did not sing the naughty song, and make game of the storks."

"But the naughty, ugly boy, who was the first to begin singing it," cried the young storks; "what shall we do with him?"

"In the pond lies a little infant, who has dreamed itself to death. We'll take him home to the naughty boy, and then he'll cry, because we've



" 'In the pond lies a little infant, who has dreamed itself to death.' "

brought him a little dead brother. But as for the good boy—you have not forgotten him—who said it was a shame to make game of animals, we will bring him both a brother and a sister.

And as the boy's name is Peter, you shall all be called Peter after him."

And all was done as agreed upon, and all storks were henceforth named Peter, and are called so still.





The Ugly Duckling

IN the fields how beautiful, how fresh everything looked ! It was summer, and the corn was yellow, the oats were green, the hayricks were standing in the verdant meadows, and the stork was walking about on his long, red legs, chattering away in Egyptian—the language he had learned from his lady mother. The cornfields and meadows were surrounded by large forests, in the middle of which lay deep lakes. Oh, it was lovely indeed to walk abroad in the country just then !

In a sunny spot stood an old country house, encircled by canals. Between the wall and the water's edge there grew huge burdock leaves, that had shot up to such a height that a little child might have stood upright under the tallest of them ; and this spot was as wild as though it had been situated in the depths of a wood. In this snug retirement a duck was sitting on her nest to hatch her young ; but she began to think it a wearisome task, as the little ones seemed very backward in making their appearance ; besides,

she had few visitors, for the other ducks preferred swimming about in the canals, instead of being at the trouble of climbing up the slope, and then sitting under a burdock leaf to gossip with her.

At length one egg cracked, and then another. "Peep! peep!" cried they, as each yoke became a live thing, and popped out its head.

"Quack! quack!" said the mother, and they tried to cackle like her, while they looked all about them under the green leaves; and she allowed them to look to their hearts' content, because green is good for the eyes.

"How large the world is, to be sure!" said the young ones. And truly enough, they had rather more room than when they were still in the egg-shell.

"Do you fancy this is the whole world?" cried the mother. "Why, it reaches far away beyond the other side of the garden, down to the parson's field; though I never went to such a distance as that. But are you not all there?" continued she, rising. "No, faith! you are not, for there still lies the largest egg. I wonder how long this business is to last—I really begin to grow quite tired of it!" And she sat down once more.

"Well, how are you getting on?" inquired an old duck, who came to pay her a visit.

"This egg takes a deal of hatching," answered the sitting duck. "It won't break; but just

look at the others, are they not the prettiest ducklings ever seen? They are the image of their father, who, by the bye, does not trouble himself to come and see me."

"Let me look at the egg that won't break," quoth the old duck. "Take my word for it, it must be a guinea-fowl's egg. I was once deceived in the same way, and I bestowed a deal of care and anxiety on the youngsters, for they are afraid of water. I could not make them take to it. I stormed and raved, but it was of no use. Let's see the egg. Sure enough, it is a guinea-fowl's egg. Leave it alone, and set about teaching the other children to swim."

"I'll just sit upon it a bit longer," said the duck; "for since I have sat so long, a few days more won't make much odds."

"Please yourself," said the old duck, as she went away.

At length the large egg cracked. "Peep! peep!" squeaked the youngster, as he crept out. How big and ugly he was, to be sure! The duck looked at him, saying: "Really, this is a most enormous duckling! None of the others are like him. I wonder whether he is a guinea-chick after all? Well, we shall soon see when we get down to the water, for in he shall go, though I push him in myself."

On the following morning the weather was most delightful, and the sun was shining brightly on

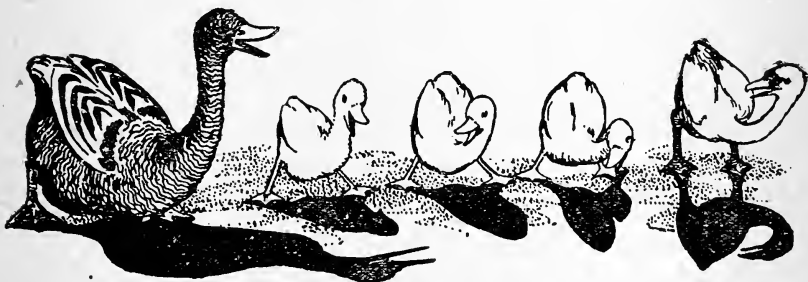
the green burdock leaves. The mother duck toled her young brood down to the canal. Splash into the water she went. "Quack! quack!" cried she, and forthwith one duckling after another jumped in. The water closed over their heads for a moment; but they soon rose to the surface again, and swam about so nicely, just as if their legs paddled them about of their own accord; and they had all taken to the water, even the ugly, grey-coated youngster swam about with the rest.

"Nay, he is no guinea-chick," said she. "Only look how capitally he uses his legs, and how steady he keeps himself—he's every inch my own child. And really he's very pretty when one comes to look at him attentively. Quack! quack!" added she; "now come along, and I'll take you into high society, and introduce you to the duck-yard; but mind you keep close to me, that nobody may tread upon you, and, above all, beware of the cat."

They now reached the farmyard, where there was a great hubbub. Two families were fighting for an eel's head, which, in the end, was carried off by the cat.

"See, children, that's the way with the world!" remarked the mother of the ducklings, licking her beak, for she would have been very glad to have had the eel's head for herself. "Now move on!" said she, "and mind you cackle properly, and bow your head before that old duck yonder. She is the noblest born of them all, and is of Spanish

descent, and that's why she is so dignified ; and look ! she has a red rag tied to her leg, which is the greatest mark of distinction that can be bestowed upon a duck, as it shows an anxiety not to lose her, and that she should be recognized by both beast and man. Now cackle—and don't turn in your toes ; a well-bred duckling spreads his feet wide apart, like papa and mamma, in this sort of way. Now bend your neck, and say 'Quack !' ”



“ ‘ Now bend your neck, and say “ quack ! ” ’ ”

The ducklings did as they were bid ; but the other ducks, after looking at them, only said aloud : “ Now, look ! here comes another set, as if we were not numerous enough already. And, bless me ! what a queer-looking chap one of the ducklings is, to be sure ; we can't put up with him ! ” And one of the throng darted forward and bit him in the neck.

“ Leave him alone,” said the mother ; “ he did no harm to any one.”

"No ; but he is too big and uncouth," said the biting duck, "and therefore he wants a thrashing."

"Mamma has a sweet little family," said the old duck with the rag about her leg ; "they are all pretty except one, who is rather ill-favoured. I wish mamma could polish him a bit."

"I'm afraid that will be impossible, your grace," said the mother of the ducklings. "It's true, he is not pretty, but he has a very good disposition, and swims as well, or perhaps better than all the others put together. However, he may grow prettier, and perhaps become smaller ; he remained too long in the egg-shell, and therefore his figure is not properly formed." And with this she smoothed down the ruffled feathers of his neck, adding : "At all events, as he is a male duck, it won't matter so much. I think he'll prove strong, and be able to fight his way through the world."

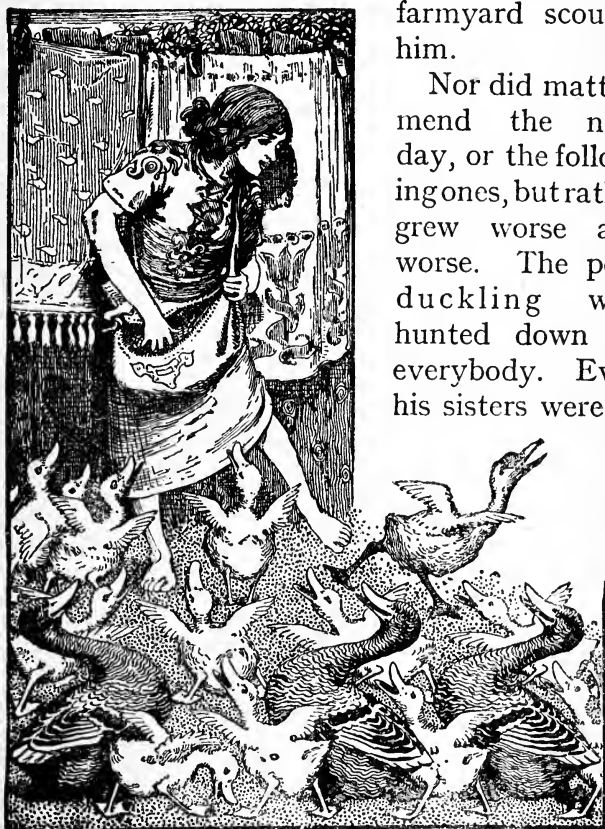
"The other ducklings are elegant little creatures," said the old duck. "Now, make yourself at home ; and if you should happen to find an eel's head, you can bring it to me."

And so the family made themselves comfortable.

But the poor duckling who had been the last to creep out of his egg-shell, and looked so ugly, was bitten, pushed about, and made game of, not only by the ducks, but by the hens. They all declared he was much too big, and a guinea-fowl who fancied himself at least an emperor, because he had come into the world with spurs, now puffed

himself up like a vessel in full sail and flew at the duckling, and blustered till his head turned completely red, so that the poor little thing did not know where he could walk or stand, and was quite grieved at being so ugly that the whole farmyard scouted him.

Nor did matters mend the next day, or the following ones, but rather grew worse and worse. The poor duckling was hunted down by everybody. Even his sisters were so



"The girl who fed the poultry kicked him."

unkind to him that they were continually saying : " I wish the cat would run away with you, you ugly creature ! " While his mother added : " I wish you had never been born ! " And the ducks pecked at him, the hens struck him, and the girl who fed the poultry used to kick him.

So he ran away, and flew over the palings. The little birds in the bushes were startled, and took wing. " That is because I am so ugly," thought the duckling, as he closed his eyes, though he ran on further till he came to a large marsh inhabited by wild ducks. Here he spent the night, and tired and sorrowful enough he was.

On the following morning, when the wild ducks rose and saw their new comrade, they said : " What sort of a creature are you ? " Upon which the duckling greeted them all round as civilly as he knew how.

" You are remarkably ugly," observed the wild ducks ; " but we don't care about that so long as you do not want to marry into our family." Poor, forlorn creature ! He had truly no such thoughts in his head. All he wanted was to obtain leave to lie among the rushes, and drink a little of the marsh water.

He remained there for two whole days, at the end of which there came two wild geese, or, more properly speaking, goslings, who were only just out of the egg-shell, and consequently very pert.

" I say, friend," quoth they, " you are so ugly

that we should have no objection to take you with us for a travelling companion. In the neighbouring marsh there dwell some sweetly pretty female geese, all of them unmarried, and who cackle most charmingly. Perhaps you may have a chance to pick up a wife amongst them, ugly as you are."

Pop! pop! sounded through the air, and the two wild goslings fell dead amongst the rushes, while the water turned as red as blood. Pop! pop! again echoed around, and whole flocks of wild geese flew up from the rushes. Again and again the same alarming noise was heard. It was a shooting party, and the sportsmen surrounded the whole marsh, while others had climbed into the branches of the trees that overshadowed the rushes. A blue mist rose in clouds and mingled with the green leaves, and sailed far away across the water; a pack of dogs next flounced into the marsh. Splash, splash, they went, while the reeds and rushes bent beneath them on all sides. What a fright they occasioned the poor duckling! He turned away his head to hide it under his wing, when, lo! a tremendous-looking dog, with his tongue lolling out, and his eyes glaring fearfully, stood right before him, opening his jaws and showing his sharp teeth, as though he would gobble up the poor little duckling at a mouthful; but splash, splash, on he went without touching him.

"Thank goodness!" sighed the duckling, "I am so ugly that even a dog won't bite me."



'What's that?' said the woman, looking round."

And he lay quite still, while the shot rattled through the rushes, and pop after pop echoed through the air.

It was not till late in the day that all became quiet, but the poor youngster did not yet venture to rise, but waited several hours before he looked about him, and then hastened out of the marsh as fast as he could go. He ran across fields and meadows, till there arose such a storm that he could scarcely get on at all.

Towards evening he reached a wretched little cottage, that was in such a tumble-down condition, that if it remained standing at all, it could only be from not yet having made up its mind on which side it should fall first. The tempest was now raging to such a height that the duckling was forced to sit down to stem the wind, when he perceived that the door hung so loosely on one of its hinges that he could slip into the room through the crack, which he accordingly did.

The inmates of the cottage were a woman, a tom-cat, and a hen. The tom-cat, whom she called her darling, could raise his back and purr ; and he could even throw out sparks, provided he were stroked against the grain. The hen had small, short legs, for which reason she was called Henny Shortlegs ; she laid good eggs, and her mistress loved her as if she had been her own child.

Next morning they perceived the little stranger,

when the tom-cat began to purr, and the hen to cluck.

"What's that?" said the woman, looking round. Not seeing very distinctly, she mistook the ducklings for a fat duck that had lost its way. "Why, this is quite a prize!" added she; "I can now get duck's eggs, unless, indeed, it be a male! We must wait a bit and see."



"The duckling sat in a corner very much out of spirits."

So the duckling was kept on trial for three weeks; but no eggs were forthcoming. The tom-cat and the hen were the master and mistress of the house, and always said: "We and the world" — for they fancied themselves to be the half, and by far the best half too, of the whole universe. The duckling thought there might be two opinions on this point, but the hen would not admit of any such doubts.

"Can you lay eggs?" asked she.

"No."

"Then have the goodness to hold your tongue."

And the tom-cat inquired: "Can you rise your back, or purr, or throw out sparks?"

"No."

"Then you have no business to have any opinion at all, when rational people are talking."

The duckling sat in a corner very much out of

spirits, when in came the fresh air and the sunshine which gave him such a strange longing to swim on the water, that he could not help saying so to the hen.

"What's this whim?" said she. "That comes of being idle. If you could either lay eggs or purr, you would not indulge in such fancies."

"But it is so delightful to swim about on the water!" observed the duckling, "and to feel it close over one's head when one dives down to the bottom."

"A great pleasure, indeed!" quoth the hen. "You must be crazy, surely! Only ask the cat—for he is the wisest creature I know—how he would like to swim on the water, or to dive under it. To say nothing of myself, just ask our old mistress, who is wiser than anybody in the world, whether she'd relish swimming and feeling the waters close above her head."

"You can't understand me!" said the duckling.

"We can't understand you? I should like to know who could. You don't suppose you are wiser than the tom-cat and our mistress—to say nothing of myself? Don't take these idle fancies into your head, child; but thank Heaven for all the kindness that has been shown you. Have you not found a warm room, and company that might improve you? But you are a mere chatterbox, and there's no pleasant intercourse to be had with you. And you may take my word for it, for I

mean you well. I say disagreeable things, which is a mark of true friendship. Now, look to it, and mind that you either lay eggs or learn to purr and emit sparks."

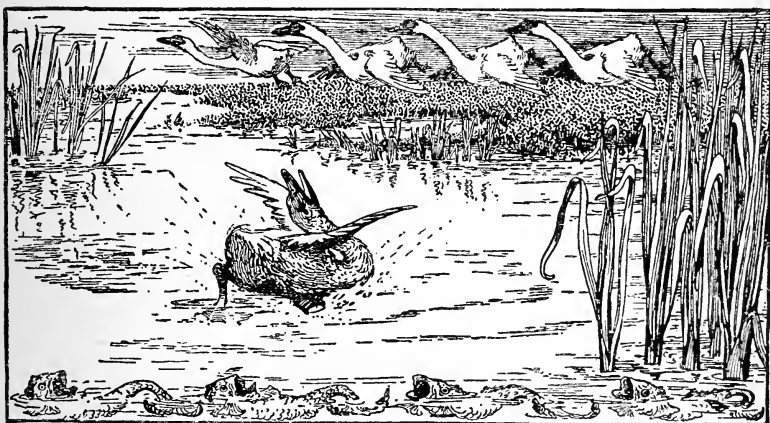
"I think I'll take my chance, and go abroad into the wide world," said the duckling.

"Do," said the hen.

And the duckling went forth, and swam on the water, and dived beneath its surface ; but he was slighted by all other animals, on account of his ugliness.

Autumn had now set in. The leaves of the forest had turned first yellow and then brown ; and the wind caught them up and made them dance about. It began to be very cold in the higher regions of the air, and the clouds looked heavy with hail and flakes of snow ; while the raven sat on a hedge, crying "Caw ! caw !" from sheer cold ; and one began to shiver if one merely thought about it. The poor duckling had a bad time of it ! One evening, just as the sun was setting in all its glory, there came a whole flock of beautiful large birds from a large grove. The duckling had never seen any so lovely before. They were dazzlingly white, with long, graceful necks ; they were swans. They uttered a peculiar cry, and then spread their magnificent wings, and away they flew from the cold country to warmer lands across the open sea. They rose so high—so high that the ugly duckling felt a strange sensation

come over him. He turned round and round in the water like a wheel, stretched his neck up into the air towards them, and uttered so loud and strange a cry, that he was frightened at it himself. Oh ! never could he again forget those beautiful, happy birds ; and when they were quite out of sight, he dived down to the bottom of the water, and when he once more rose to the surface, he was half



“ He turned round and round in the water like a wheel.”

beside himself. He knew not how these birds were called, nor whither they were bound ; but he felt an affection for them such as he had never yet experienced for any living creature. Nor did he even presume to envy them ; for how could it ever have entered his head to wish himself endowed with their loveliness ? He would have been

glad enough if the ducks had merely suffered him to remain among them—poor ugly animal that he was !

And the winter proved so very, very cold ! The duckling was obliged to keep swimming about, for fear the water should freeze entirely ; but every night the hole in which he swam grew smaller and smaller. It now froze so hard that the surface of the ice cracked again ; yet the duckling still paddled about, to prevent the hole from closing up. At last he was so exhausted that he lay insensible, and became ice-bound.

Early next morning a peasant came by, and, seeing what had happened, broke the ice to pieces with his wooden shoe, and carried the duckling home to his wife ; so the little creature was revived once more.

The children wished to play with him ; but the duckling thought they meant to hurt him, and in his fright he bounced right into a bowl of milk, that was spirted all over the room. The woman clapped her hands, which only frightened him still more, and drove him first into the butter-tub, then down into the meal-tub, and out again. What a scene then ensued ! The woman screamed and flung the tongs at him ; the children tumbled over each other in their endeavours to catch the duckling, and laughed and shrieked. Luckily the door stood open, and he slipped through ; and then over the faggots, into the newly-fallen snow, where he lay quite exhausted.

But it would be too painful to tell of all the privations and misery that the duckling endured during the hard winter. He was lying in a marsh, amongst the reeds, when the sun again began to shine. The larks were singing, and the spring had set in in all its beauty.

The duckling now felt able to flap his wings ; they rustled much louder than before, and bore



“ The children would have played with him.”

him away most sturdily ; and, before he was well aware of it, he found himself in a large garden, where the apple-trees were in full blossom, and the fragrant elder was steeping its long, drooping branches in the waters of a winding canal. Oh, how beautiful everything looked in the first freshness of spring ! Three magnificent white

swans now emerged from the thicket before him ; they flapped their wings, and then swam lightly on the surface of the water. The duckling recognized the beautiful creatures, and was impressed with feelings of melancholy peculiar to himself.

“ I will fly towards those royal birds, and they will strike me dead for daring to approach them, so ugly as I am ! But it matters not. Better to be killed by them than to be pecked at by the ducks, beaten by the hens, pushed about by the girl that feeds the poultry, and to suffer want in the winter.” And he flew into the water, and swam towards these splendid swans, who rushed to meet him with rustling wings the moment they saw him. “ Do but kill me ! ” said the poor animal, as he bent his head down to the surface of the water and awaited his doom. But what did he see in the clear stream ? Why, his own image which was no longer that of a heavy-looking dark grey bird, ugly and ill-favoured, but of a beautiful swan !

It matters not being born in a duck-yard, when one is hatched from a swan's egg !

He now rejoiced over all the misery and the straits he had endured, as it made him feel the full depth of the happiness that awaited him. And the large swans swam round him, and stroked him with their beaks.

Some little children now came into the garden, and threw bread-crumbs and corn into the water ;

and the youngest cried ; “ There is a new one ! ” The other children were delighted, too, and repeated : “ Yes, there is a new one just come ! ” And they clapped their hands and capered about, and then flew to their father and mother, and more bread and cake was flung into the water ; and all said : “ The new one is the prettiest. So young, and so lovely ! ” And the elder swans bowed before him.

He then felt quite ashamed, and hid his head under his wings. He did not himself know what to do. He was more than happy, yet none the prouder ; for a good heart is never proud. He remembered how he had been pursued and made game of ; and now he heard everybody say he was the most beautiful of all beautiful birds. Even the elder-bush bent its boughs down to him in the water ; and the sun appeared so warm, and so mild ! He then flapped his wings, and raised his slender neck, as he cried in the fullness of his heart : “ I never dreamed of such happiness while I was an ugly duckling.”



The Wild Swans

AR away hence, in the land whither the swans fly when it is cold winter with us, there once lived a king who had eleven sons, and one daughter named Elise. The eleven brothers were princes, and used to go to school with a star on their breast and a sword at their side. They wrote on gold slates with diamond pencils, and learned by heart as easily as they could read; one could immediately perceive they were princes. Their sister Elise sat on a little glass stool, and had a book full of prints, that had cost nearly half the kingdom to purchase.

Oh, these children were happy indeed!—but, unfortunately, their happiness was not to last.

Their father, who was the king of the land, married a wicked queen, who was not well disposed towards the poor children. This they perceived from the very first day. There were festivities in the palace, and the children were playing at receiving visitors; but instead of their obtaining, as usual, all the cakes and roast apples that were to be had,

she merely gave them some sand in a tea-cup, and told them they could make-believe with that.

In the following week, she sent their little sister Elise to a peasant's cottage in the country ; and, before long, she spoke so ill of the poor princes to the king, that he no longer troubled himself about them.

" Fly out into the world, and pick up your own livelihood," said the wicked queen. " Fly in the shape of large birds without a voice." But she could not make things as bad as she wished, for they were turned into eleven beautiful wild swans ; and away they flew out of the palace windows, uttering a peculiar cry as they swept over the park to the forest beyond.

It was still early as they passed by the peasant's cottage, where Elise lay asleep. They hovered over the roof, and extended their long necks, and flapped their wings, but nobody heard or saw them ; so they were obliged to go on. And they rose up to the clouds, and flew out into the wide world, until they reached a large, gloomy forest, that shelved down to the sea-shore.

Poor little Elise was standing in a room in the



" A book full of prints."

cottage, playing with a green leaf, for she had no other toy. And she pierced a hole through the leaf, and looked up at the sun, when she fancied she saw her brothers' clear eyes ; and every time the warm sunbeams fell on her cheeks, she used to think of their kisses.

One day was just as monotonous as another. If the wind rustled through the large hedge of rose-bushes, he would whisper to the roses : " Who can be more beautiful than you ? ". But the roses would shake their heads, and answer : " Elise." And if the old woman sat before the door, on a Sunday, reading her psalm-book, the wind would turn over the leaves, and say to the book : " Who can be more pious than thou ? " And then the psalm-book would answer : " Elise." And both the roses and the psalm-book spoke the pure truth.

When she was fifteen, she was to return home. But when the queen saw how beautiful she was, her heart was filled with hatred and spite. She would willingly have turned her into a wild swan, like her brothers, but she dared not do it just yet, because the king wished to see his daughter.

Early in the morning, the queen went into the bath-room, which was built of marble, and furnished with soft cushions, and the most beautiful carpet and hangings imaginable ; and she took three toads, and kissed them, and said to one of them : " Sit upon Elise's head when she comes

into the bath, that she may become stupid like yourself. Sit upon her forehead," said she to another, "that she may grow as ugly as you, so that her father may not recognize her. Rest on her heart," whispered she to the third, "that she may have a bad disposition, which will breed her pain." She then put the toads into the transparent water, which turned green, and next called Elise, and helped her to undress and to get into the bath. And as Elise dipped her head under the water, one toad placed itself on her hair, another on her forehead, and a third on her breast. But she did not appear to observe them; and as soon as she rose up again, three poppies were floating on the water. If the animals had not been venomous, and had not been kissed by the witch, they would have been changed into red roses. But flowers they became, however, because they had rested on her head and her heart. She was too pious and too innocent for any witchcraft to have power over her.



"Helped her to undress and get into the bath."

When the wicked queen perceived this, she rubbed the princess with walnut-juice till she was quite brown, and besmeared her face with rancid ointment, and tangled her magnificent hair, till it was impossible to recognize the beautiful Elise.

When her father saw her he was quite frightened, and declared she was not his daughter. Nobody but the watch-dog and the swallows would recognize her—only they were poor animals, and could not speak a word.

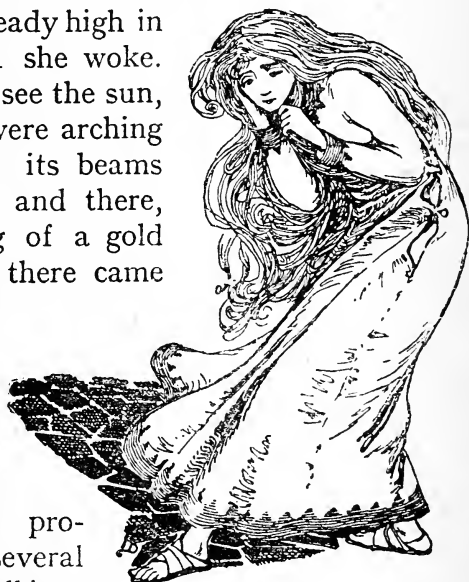
Poor Elise then cried, and thought of her eleven brothers, who were all away. And she stole out of the palace in great affliction, and walked the whole day long across fields and marshes, till she reached the large forest. She knew not whither she was going, but she felt so sad, and she longed to see her brothers, who, she felt certain, had been driven out into the world like herself, and she determined to seek till she found them.

She had been but a short time in the wood when night came on ; and having walked a long way, she lay down on the soft moss, said her prayers, and leaned her head against the stump of a tree. It was perfectly quiet all around, the air was mild, and hundreds of glow-worms lit up the surrounding grass and moss like green fire ; and if she touched a twig ever so lightly, the brilliant insects showered down like so many falling stars.

All night she dreamed of her brothers. She thought they were playing together as in childhood,

and were writing with the diamond pencils on the gold slates, and looking at the prints in the book that had cost half the kingdom. Only, instead of making sums on the slates, as heretofore, they wrote down the valiant deeds they had achieved, and all that they had done and seen; and in the print-book everything was living—the birds were singing, and the figures were walking out of the book, and speaking to Elise and her brothers. But the moment the latter turned over the leaves, they jumped back into their places, that no disorder might ensue.

The sun was already high in the heavens when she woke. Not that she could see the sun, for the lofty trees were arching over her head, but its beams were playing here and there, like the fluttering of a gold gauze scarf; and there came a sweet fragrance from the woods, and the birds almost perched on her shoulders. She heard the rippling of water, which proceeded from several largestreams that fell into a lake, that had a most



“Stole out of the palace in great affliction.”

beautiful sandy bed. Thick bushes grew round the lake, but the deer had made a large opening at one spot, through which Elise was enabled to reach the water. Its surface was so clear, that when the wind did not ruffle the branches and bushes, one might have fancied they had been painted on the bottom of the lake, so plainly was every leaf reflected, whether it stood in the sunshine or the shade.

As soon as Elise saw her own image, she was frightened at finding herself so brown and so ugly. But on wetting her little hand, and rubbing her eyes and forehead, her white skin was soon apparent once more. She then undressed, and got into the water, and a lovelier royal child than herself could not have been met with in the wide world.

When she had dressed herself again, and braided her long hair, she went to the running stream, and drank out of the hollow of her hand, and then she wandered deeper into the forest, without knowing what she meant to do. She thought of her brothers, and trusted that God would not abandon her. God has bidden the wild apples grow to feed the hungry, and He led her to one of these trees, whose boughs were bending beneath the weight of their fruit. Here she made her mid-day meal, and after propping up the branches, she went into the gloomiest depths of the forest. It was so quiet here that she could hear the sound of her own footsteps, and every little dried leaf that crackled

under her feet. Not a bird was to be seen, nor did a sunbeam penetrate through the large dark branches. The lofty trunks stood so close to each other that when she looked before her it seemed as if she were shut in by a lattice made of huge beams of wood. It was solitude such as she had never known before.

The night was quite dark. Not a little glow-worm beamed from the moss. She lay down sorrowfully to compose herself to sleep. She then fancied that the boughs above her head moved aside, and that the Almighty looked down upon her with pitying eyes, while little angels hovered above His head and under His arms.

Next morning when she woke she could not tell



"An old woman with a basket full of cherries."

whether this was a dream, or whether it had really taken place.

She then set out, but had not gone many steps when she met an old woman with a basket full of cherries. The old woman gave her some to eat, and Elise asked her if she had not seen eleven princes riding through the forest.



“No,” said the old woman; “but yesterday I saw eleven swans, with gold crowns on their heads, swimming down the river hereabouts.”

She then led Elise a little further, towards a slope, at the foot of which ran a winding rivulet. The trees on its banks stretched forth their long, leafy branches till they met, and wherever their growth

would not have allowed them to mingle their foliage, the roots had broken loose from the soil, and hung entwined with the branches across the river.

Elise then bid the old dame farewell, and followed the rivulet till it flowed towards a wide, open shore.

The sea now lay before the young maiden in all its splendour, but not a sail was to be seen, and not as much as a boat could be descried. How was she to proceed further ? She looked at the countless little pebbles on the shore, which the water had worn till they were quite smooth—glass, iron, stones, everything, in short, that lay there and had been washed by the waves, had assumed the shape of water, though it was softer still than her delicate hand. “ It rolls along indefatigably, and wears away the hardest substances. I will be equally indefatigable. Thanks for the lesson you give me, ye clear, rolling waves ! My heart tells me you will bear me to my dear brothers ! ”

In the moist seaweeds lay eleven white swan's feathers, which she gathered into a bunch. Drops of water trembled upon them ; but whether they were dewdrops or tears, nobody could tell. It was lonely on that seashore, but she did not feel it to be so, for the sea was ever changing, and displayed more variety in a few hours than the sweetest landscapes could show in a whole year. If a heavy black cloud arose, it seemed as if the sea meant to say : “ I, too, know how to look dark ” ;

and then the wind blew, and the waves turned their white side outwards. But if the clouds were rosy, then the winds slept, and the sea looked like a rose



Just at sunset Elise saw eleven wild swans, with golden crowns on their heads, fly towards the shore."

leaf—now white, now green. Yet, however calm it might be, there was always a slight motion near the shore, and the waters would heave slightly, like the breast of a slumbering infant.

Just at sunset Elise saw eleven wild swans, with gold crowns on their heads, flying towards the shore, one behind the other, like a long white ribbon. Elise then went up the slope, and hid herself behind a bush ; the swans came down close to her, and flapped their large white wings.

The sun had no sooner sunk into the water than their swans' plumage fell off, and Elise's brothers stood there as eleven handsome princes. She uttered a loud scream ; for, changed as they were, she knew and felt it must be they. She flung herself into their arms, calling them by their names ; and the princes were quite happy on recognizing their little sister, and finding how beautiful she had grown. They laughed and cried all in a breath, and they had soon related to each other how wicked their stepmother had been to them all.

" We brothers," said the eldest, " fly about, as wildswans, as long as the sun stands in the heavens ; but no sooner has it sunk down than we recover our human shape. Therefore we must always provide a resting-place for our feet towards sunset ; for were we flying in the clouds at this hour, we should fall into the sea on resuming our natural form. We do not live here. There lies across the sea a country as beautiful as this ; but the way thither is long. We have to cross the wide sea, and there is not an island to be met with on the passage ; only one solitary little rock lifts its head from the midst of the waters, and is barely large

enough to afford us a resting-place by crowding closely together. If the sea is rough, the waves dash over us ; still we thank God even for this barren crag, where we spend the night in our human shape, for without it we should never be able to visit our beloved country, since it requires two of the longest days in the year for our flight.



" She stroked his wings."

It is only once a year that we have the privilege of visiting our home, and we have but eleven days to remain here and to fly over the forest, whence we can look upon the palace where we were born, and where our father lives, and at the church where our mother lies buried. We feel here as if the very trees and bushes were related to us ; we see the wild horses careering over the steppes as we saw them

in childhood ; we hear the charcoal-burners singing the old songs to which we danced as children ; it is, in short, the land of our birth, and hither do we feel ourselves irresistibly attracted ; and here have we found you, our dear little sister. But we have only two days left to remain here, and then we must cross the sea to go to a beautiful country, which, however, is not our own. How shall we take you with us when we have neither ship nor boat ? ”

“ How can I break your spell ? ” asked the sister.

And they talked nearly the whole night through, and only slept a very few hours.

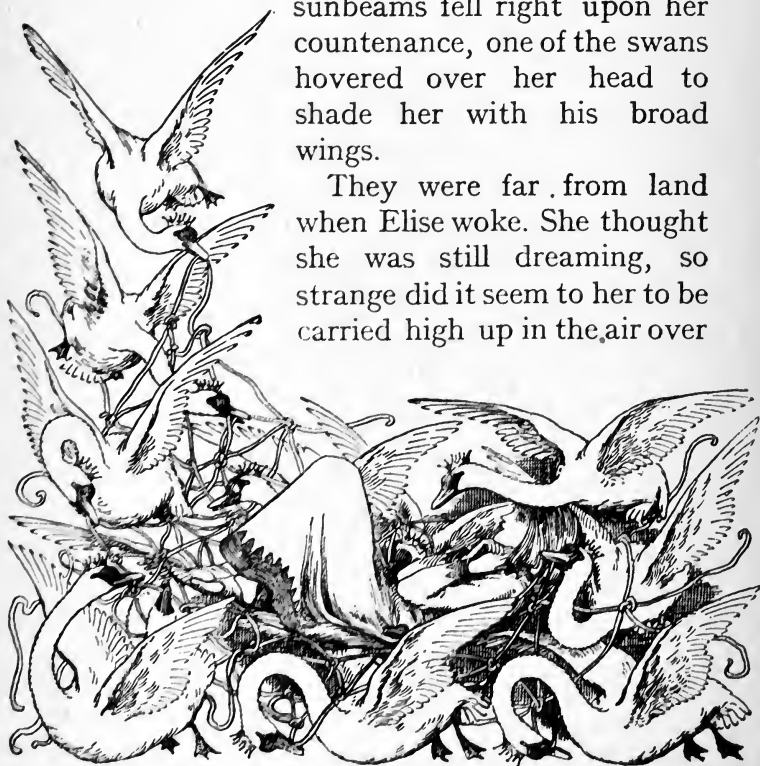
Elise awoke on hearing the rustling of the swans' wings as they hovered over her, for her brothers were once more transformed. They described large circles, and at length flew quite away ; but one of them, the youngest, remained behind. He nestled his head in her lap, and she stroked his wings, and they remained together the whole day. Towards evening the others returned ; and when the sun had set they resumed their natural shape.

“ To-morrow we must fly away,” said one of them, “ and may not return till the expiration of a whole year. Yet we cannot leave you thus. Have you the courage to accompany us ? My arm is strong enough to carry you through the forest, and why should not the wings of us all suffice to bear you across the ocean ? ”

“ Yes, do take me with you,” said Elise.

They spent the whole night in making a net with the pliant bark of osiers and ropy sedges, and the net proved large and strong. Elise lay down upon it, and when the sun rose, and her brothers were changed to swans they took up the net with their beaks, and flew up to the clouds with their beloved sister, who was still fast asleep. As the sunbeams fell right upon her countenance, one of the swans hovered over her head to shade her with his broad wings.

They were far from land when Elise woke. She thought she was still dreaming, so strange did it seem to her to be carried high up in the air over



"The swans carried Elise away from the rock."

the wide sea. By her side lay a branch full of delicious ripe berries, and a bundle of savoury roots; these had been gathered by her youngest brother, and placed ready for her use. She smiled her thanks to him, for she recognized him in the swan who was hovering over her to shade her with his wings.

They were so high up in the air that the largest ship below them looked like a white sea-mew riding on the waves. A great cloud stood behind them like a vast mountain, and on this Elise saw depicted her own shadow and that of the eleven swans, in giant proportions. This was a prettier picture than she had ever yet seen. But when the sun rose higher, and the cloud remained further behind them, the floating vision vanished from her sight.

They flew on and on the livelong day, like an arrow hurtling through the air; still, they proceeded somewhat more slowly than usual, having their sister to carry. Dark clouds arose as evening came on, and Elise beheld the sinking sun with an anxious heart, for as yet no rock was in sight. It seemed to her as if the swans were flapping their wings with desperate efforts. Alas! she was the cause they could not advance faster. And at sunset they must recover their human shape, and fall into the sea, and get drowned! Oh, how she prayed for their safety from her inmost heart!—but still no rock appeared. The black cloud

approached, violent gusts of wind told of a coming storm, while the clouds, gathered into one massive, threatening wave, seemed to move forward like lead. One flash of lightning followed upon another.

The sun had now reached the edge of the sea. Elise's heart beat fast, and the swans darted down so swiftly that she thought she must fall. But now again they soared in the air. The sun had dipped half into the water, when at length the little rock appeared below them. It did not look larger than a sea-dog's head peeping out of the waves. The sun sank so rapidly that it now only looked like a star ; and at that moment their feet touched the solid ground. The sun went out like the last spark in a piece of burned paper, and the brothers now stood arm-in-arm round their sister ; but there was not an inch more room than just sufficient for herself and them.

The waves lashed the rock, and a drizzling mist kept falling over them, while the sky was lighted up with continual flashes, and one clap of thunder followed close upon another ; but the sister and her brothers sat holding each other's hands, and singing psalms, from which they derived both hope and courage.

Towards dawn the air was pure and still ; and, the moment the sun had risen, the swans carried Elise away from the rock.

The sea was still rough, and, when seen from

above, the white foam that crested the dark green waves looked like millions of swans swimming on the waters.

When the sun had risen higher, Elise saw before her, in the air, a mountain, with masses of glittering ice upon its crags, from the midst of which rose a castle at least a mile long, with colonnade upon colonnade piled boldly each on the top of the other. Forests of palm-trees were waving below, together with flowers as large as mill-wheels.

She inquired if that was the land whither they were bound. But the swans shook their heads ; for what she saw was nothing but the fairy Morgiana's beautiful and ever-varying castle, built of clouds, and which no mortal could enter. Elise was still gazing at it, when down fell mountains, forests, and castle in one vast heap, and twenty stately churches, all alike, with high steeples and gothic windows, rose upon their ruins.

She thought she heard the organ pealing, but it was the roaring of the sea that deceived her.

As she approached the churches, these, in turn, changed to a large fleet that seemed to be sailing under her. On looking below, however, she perceived it to be mere clouds of mist that were gliding across the waters. She thus kept viewing an endless succession of sights till at length she perceived the real land whither they were going, where stood the finest blue mountains, with cedar forests, towers, and castles. Long before sunset she sat

on a rock, in front of a large cavern, that was overgrown with delicate green creepers, looking like an embroidered carpet.

"Now we shall see what you will dream about to-night," said the youngest brother, as he showed his sister her chamber.

"Heaven send that I may dream how to save you!" said she; and this notion busied her intently, and she prayed heartily to God to help her—so heartily, indeed, that she continued praying in her sleep. She then thought she was flying up through the air, to the fairy Morgiana's castle of clouds; and the fairy came forth to welcome her, in all her beauty and splendour, yet resembling withal the old woman who had given her the berries in the forest, and told her of the swans with gold crowns on their heads.

"Your brothers can be delivered," said she; "but have you sufficient courage and constancy to break the spell? Water is softer than your delicate hands, and yet it wears away stones; but it does not feel the pains your fingers will have to feel; and, having no heart, it cannot suffer the cares and anxiety that you will have to endure. Do you see this stinging-nettle that I hold in my hand? A number of the same sort grow round the cavern in which you are sleeping; and, mark me well, only those, and such as grow in churchyards, are available for the purpose in question. You must pluck them, although they will blister your

hands. By treading upon them with your feet you will obtain flax, with which you must braid eleven coats of mail, with long sleeves, that will no sooner be thrown over the eleven swans than the spell will be broken. But remember that from the moment you begin this work until it be finished, though it should take you years to accomplish,



“Held her before him on his horse.”

you must not speak a word, or the first syllable you pronounce would strike a death dagger through your brothers' hearts. Their lives depend on your silence. Mark this well.”

And at the same time she touched her hand with the nettle, which was like burning fire, and caused Elise to wake. It was broad day, and close beside her lay a nettle, like those she had seen in her dream.

She then fell on her knees, and thanked God, and left the cave to begin her work.

Her delicate hands now plucked the ugly nettles that were like fire. Large blisters rose on her hands and arms ; yet she suffered cheerfully, in the hopes of delivering her beloved brothers. She trod each nettle with her bare feet, and then began to braid the green flax.

When the sun had sunk, her brothers came home, and were frightened to find her dumb. They thought it some fresh spell contrived by their wicked stepmother. But, on seeing her hands, they understood what she was doing for their sakes; and the youngest brother wept, and wherever his tears fell on her hands the burning blisters disappeared.

She worked all night, for she could not rest till she had delivered her dear brothers. The swans were absent during the whole of the following day, and she sat alone, but never had the hours seemed to fly faster. One coat of mail was already finished, and she then began another.

A bugle-horn now echoed amongst the mountains, and made her start with fear. The sound approached, she heard the barking of dogs, and she flew back into the cave in great alarm ; and, tying up the nettles that she had gathered and dressed into a bundle she sat upon it.

At that moment a large dog jumped out from a narrow pass between the mountains, and was

quickly followed by another, and another still ; they barked aloud, and ran back, and then returned again. In a few minutes all the huntsmen stood before the cave, and the handsomest among them was the king of the land. He stepped up to Elise, who was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

"How did you come hither, lovely maiden?" asked he.

Elise shook her head. She dared not speak, for her brothers' delivery and lives were at stake : and she hid her hands under her apron, that the king might not see what she must be enduring.

"Come with me," said he ; "you cannot remain here. If you are as good as you are beautiful, I will dress you in silk and velvet, and place my gold crown on your head, and you shall dwell in my richest palace. He then lifted her on to his horse. She wept, and wrung her hands, but the king said : "I do but wish for your happiness. Some day you will thank me for what I am doing."

And then he hunted through the mountains, and held her before him on his horse, and the huntsmen hunted behind them.

Towards sunset, the handsome capital, with its churches and cupolas, lay before them. And the king led her into the palace, where large fountains were playing in marble halls, whose walls and ceilings were adorned with paintings. But she had not the heart to look at these fine things ;



"Until she reached the churchyard."

and kept weeping and mourning. However, she willingly allowed the women to dress her in regal robes, to braid her hair with pearls, and to put delicate gloves over her scorched fingers.

When she appeared in all her magnificence, she looked so dazzlingly beautiful, that the whole court bowed still more profoundly before her. And the king chose her for his bride, though the archbishop shook his head, and whispered that the pretty maid of the forest was in all likelihood a witch, who had fascinated the eyes and befooled the heart of their king.

But the king would not listen to him, and ordered the music to strike up, and the most costly dishes to be laid on the table, while the loveliest girls danced around her. And she was led through the fragrant garden to most magnificent rooms; but not a smile could be won from her lips, or made to sparkle in her eyes. She seemed the image of sorrow. The king then opened a little room, close to her sleeping chamber, that was provided with a costly green carpet, and was exactly like the cave she came from. On the floor lay the bundle of flax that she had spun out of the nettles, while the coat of mail, which she had finished, hung from the ceiling. All these things had been taken away by a huntsman who looked upon them as curiosities.

"You can fancy yourself in your early home," said the king. "Here is the work which busied

you in the cave ; and now, in the midst of all your magnificence, it may amuse you to look back at those days."

When Elise saw that which interested her so deeply, a smile played round her mouth, and the blood rushed back to her cheeks. She thought of her brothers' delivery, and kissed the king's hand, while he pressed her to his heart, and ordered all the bells to ring to announce their marriage. And the beautiful, dumb maid of the forest became the queen of the land.

The archbishop whispered slanderous words into the king's ears, but they could not reach his heart. The wedding, he was determined, should take place, and the archbishop himself was obliged to place the crown on the new queen's head, though he maliciously pressed down its narrow circlet on her forehead, so that it hurt her. But a heavier circlet bound her heart, and that was her sorrow for her brothers' fate. She did not heed her bodily sufferings. She remained mute, for a single word would have cost her brothers their lives ; but her eyes expressed deep love for the kind, handsome king, who did everything to please her. Each day she loved him more and more. Oh, how it would have relieved her to have told him her sorrows, and to be able to complain ! But dumb she must remain, and in silence must she finish her work. She therefore used to steal away from his side at night, and go into the little room

that was decorated like the cave, and plaited one coat of mail after another.

On beginning the seventh, however, there was no flax left.

She knew that the nettles she required grew in the churchyard; only she must pluck them herself, and she knew not how she should manage to reach the spot.

“Oh! what is the pain in my fingers, compared to the anxiety my heart endures?” thought she.

“I must attempt the adventure! The Lord will not withdraw His hand from me.” And with as much fear and trembling as if she were about to commit a wicked action, did she steal down into the garden one moonlight night, and, crossing the long alleys, she threaded the lonely streets



“The rustling of a swan's wing sounded near the grating.”

until she reached the churchyard. There she saw a circle of witches sitting on one of the broadest gravestones. These ugly witches took off their rags as if they were going to bathe, and then they dug up the fresh graves with their long, skinny fingers, and took out the dead bodies and devoured their flesh. Elise was obliged to pass by them,

and they scowled upon her ; but she prayed silently, and plucked the burning nettles, and carried them home.

One human being alone had seen her, and that was the archbishop. He was up while others were sleeping. Now he felt confirmed in his opinion that the queen was not what she ought to be, and that she was a witch, who had befooled the king and the whole nation by her arts.

He told the king, in the confessional, what he had seen and what he feared. And when harsh words came out of his mouth, the carved images of saints shook their heads, as much as to say, "It is not true ! Elise is innocent !" But the archbishop interpreted their protestations quite differently ; he pretended they bore witness against her, and that they shook their heads at her sins. Then a couple of bitter tears rolled down the king's cheeks. He went home, with a misgiving in his heart, and that night he pretended to go to sleep. But no sleep visited his eyes, and he perceived that Elise got up. Every night she did the same, and each time he followed her softly, and saw her disappear into the little room.

His brow grew darker day by day. Elise saw the change that had come over him, yet could not imagine the reason, though it made her uneasy—and besides this, how she suffered at heart on her brothers' account ! Her warm tears bedewed the regal velvet and purple, and there they lay

like glittering diamonds, and all who saw their splendour wished to be a queen. Meantime, she had nearly finished her work. Only one coat of mail was wanting ; but she was short of flax, and had not a single nettle left. Once more—and this once only—would she have to go to the churchyard and gather a few handfuls of nettles. She thought with horror of this lonely excursion, and of the frightful witches, but her will was as firm as her trust in the Lord.

Elise went, but the king and the archbishop followed her. They saw her disappear behind the grated door of the churchyard, and when they had nearly come up with her, the witches were sitting on the gravestone, as Elise had seen them, and the king turned away, for he fancied that she, whose head had been pillowed on his breast that very evening, was making one amongst those loathsome creatures.

“The people must judge her,” said he. And the people pronounced that she was to be burned as a witch.

She was now taken from the splendours of the royal palace to a dark, damp dungeon, where the wind whistled through a grating ; and instead of silk and velvet they gave her the bunch of nettles which she had gathered—this was to serve as her pillow, while the hard, burning coats of mail that she had plaited were to be her coverlet. But nothing could have been more welcome to her—she

resumed her work, and prayed to Heaven. The boys in the street sang lampoons upon her outside her prison, and not a soul comforted her with a kind word.

Towards evening the rustling of a swan's wings sounded near the grating. This was her youngest brother, who had discovered his sister's dungeon ; and she sobbed for joy on seeing him, although she knew that the following night would, in all pro-



"To see the witch burnt."¹²

bability, be her last. But now her work was almost completed, and her brothers were there.

The archbishop came to spend the last hour with her, as he had promised the king he would do. But she shook her head, and begged him by looks and by signs to go away. For, unless she completed her work that night, her sufferings, her tears, and her sleepless nights would all prove

vain. The archbishop left the prison, muttering calumnies against her, but poor Elise knew that she was innocent, and therefore she proceeded with her work.

The little mice ran about on the floor ; they dragged the nettles to her feet, in order to help as well as they could ; while a thrush sat near the grating of the window and sang most sweetly all night long, to keep up her spirits.

At early dawn, about an hour before sunrise, the eleven brothers presented themselves at the palace gate, and requested to be shown in to the king. But they were told it was impossible. It was still night, and the king was asleep and could not be woken. They implored, they threatened, the guard appeared, and at last the king himself came out to inquire what was the matter ; but just then the sun rose, and no more princes were to be seen, and nothing but eleven swans flew over the palace.

The whole population flowed out through the gates of the town, to see the witch burnt. An old, sorry-looking hack drew the cart on which she sat ; she was dressed in a sackcloth kirtle, and her beautiful hair was hanging loose on her shoulders ; her cheeks were as pale as death, and her lips moved slightly, while her fingers continued braiding the green flax. Even on her way to death, she would not interrupt the work she had undertaken ; the ten coats of mail lay at

her feet, and she was finishing the eleventh. The people scoffed at her.

"Look how the witch is muttering! She has no psalm-book in her hand—no! she is busy with her hateful juggling—let's tear her work to pieces."



"The king plucked it, and placed it in Elise's bosom,"

And they all rushed forward, and were going to tear the coats of mail, when eleven wild swans darted down, and placing themselves round her in the cart, flapped their large wings. The crowd now gave way in alarm.

"'Tis a sign from Heaven! She is surely innocent!" whispered the multitude; but they did not dare to say so aloud. The executioner

now took hold of her, but she hastily threw the eleven coats of mail over the swans, when eleven handsome princes instantly stood before her. Only the youngest had a swan's wing instead of an arm, because a sleeve was wanting to complete his coat of mail, for she had not been able to finish it.

"Now I may speak!" said she; "I am innocent!"

And the mob, on seeing what had taken place, now bowed before her as if she had been a saint; but she sank fainting into her brothers' arms, exhausted by the intense anxiety and grief she had suffered.

"Yes, she is innocent!" said the eldest brother, and he now related all that had happened. And, as he spoke, the air was filled with the perfume as of millions of roses—for every stick of firewood in the funeral pile had taken root and put forth twigs, and there stood a fragrant hedge, both tall and thick, full of red roses; and quite above bloomed a flower as white and brilliant as a star. The king plucked it, and placed it in Elise's bosom, and then she awoke, with a peaceful and happy heart.

And all the bells fell a-ringing of themselves, and birds flocked thither in long processions. And such a wedding party as returned to the palace, no king had ever seen before!

The Marsh King's Daughter



HE storks tell their young ones ever so many fairy tales, all of them from the fen and the moss. Generally the tales are suited to the youngsters' age and understanding. The baby birds are pleased if they are told just "kribly, krably, plurry-murry!" which they think wonderful; but the older ones will have something with more sense in it, or, at the least, a tale about themselves. Of the two oldest and longest tales which have been told among the storks, one we all know—that about Moses, who was placed by his mother in an ark on the waters of the Nile, was found by the king's daughter, and then was taught all learning, and became a great man, and no one knows where he was buried. Everybody has heard that tale.

But the other story is not known at all even now; perhaps because it is really a chimney-corner tale. It has been handed down by mother-stork to mother-stork for hundreds of years, and each

in turn has told it better, till now we are telling it best of all.

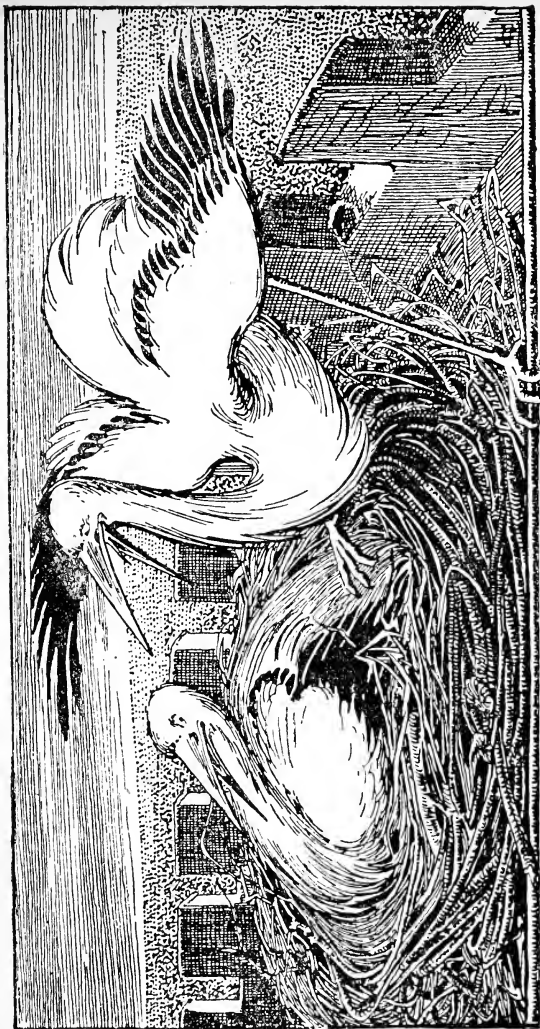
The first pair of storks who knew it had their summer quarters on a Viking's log-house by the



" Was found by the king's daughter."

moor in Wendsyssel, which is in the county of Hjörning, near Skagen in Jutland, if we want to be accurate. To this day there is still an enormous

great moss there. You can read all about it in your geography book. The moss lies where was once the bottom of the sea, before the great upheaval of the land ; and now it stretches for miles, surrounded on all sides by watery meadows and quivering bog, with turf-moss cloudberry and stunted trees growing. A fog hangs over it almost continually, and till about seventy years ago wolves were still found there. It may certainly be called a wild moor, and you can imagine what lack of paths and what abundance of swamp and sea was there thousands of years ago. In that waste man saw ages back just what he sees to-day. The reeds were just as high, with the same kind of long leaves and purplish-brown, feathery flowers as they have now ; the birches stood with white bark and fine, loose-hung leaves just as they now stand ; and for the living creatures that came there, why, the fly wore its gauze suit of just the same cut as now, and the colour of the stork's dress was white and black, with red stockings. On the other hand, the men of that time wore different clothes from those we wear. But whoever it was, poor peasant or free hunter, that trod on the quagmire, it happened thousands of years ago just as it does to-day—in he went and down he sank, down to the Marsh King, as they called him, who reigned beneath in the great Moss Kingdom. He was called also the Mire King, but we will call him by the storks' name for him—Marsh King. People

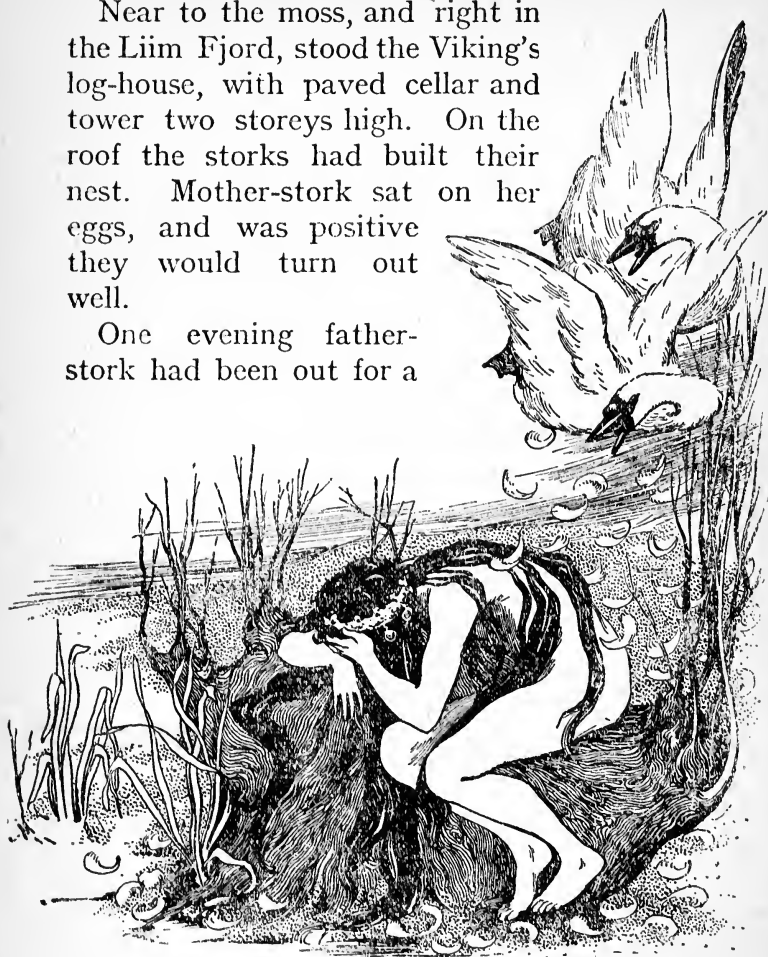


“Don't get excited ! ”

know very little about how he governed, but perhaps that is just as well.

Near to the moss, and right in the Liim Fjord, stood the Viking's log-house, with paved cellar and tower two storeys high. On the roof the storks had built their nest. Mother-stork sat on her eggs, and was positive they would turn out well.

One evening father-stork had been out for a



"Tore her feather dress into a hundred pieces."

long time, and when he came home he seemed excited and flurried.

"I've dreadful news for you!" he said to mother-stork.

"Don't get excited," said she. "Remember I'm sitting on my eggs, and I might be upset by it, and then the eggs would suffer."

"You must know it!" he answered. "She has come here, our landlord's daughter in Egypt! She has ventured on the journey here, and she is lost!"

"Why, she is of fairy descent! Tell me all about it; you know I can't bear to wait at this time, when I'm sitting."

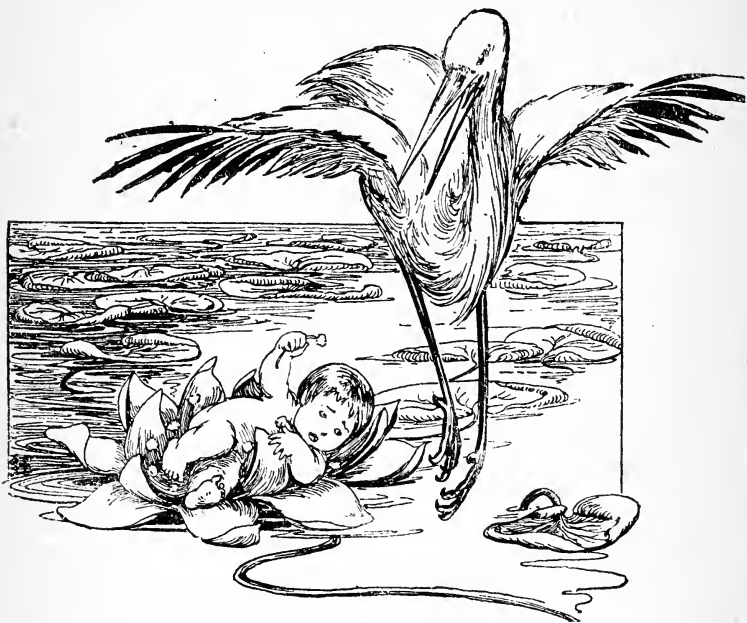
"Listen, mother. It's as you told me. She has believed what the doctor said, that the moor-flowers here could do her sick father good, and so she has flown here in a feather-dress with the other winged princesses, who have to come to the north every year to bathe and renew their youth. She has come, and she is lost!"

"You're getting too long-winded!" said mother-stork. "The eggs may be chilled! I can't bear to be excited!"

"I have watched," said father-stork, "and in the evening, when I went into the reeds, where the quagmire is able to bear me, there came three swans. Something in the way they flew told me, 'Watch; that isn't a real swan; it's only swan feathers.' You know the feeling, mother, as well as I do; you can tell if it is right."

"Yes, certainly," said she ; " but tell me about the princess. I'm tired of hearing about the swan's feathers."

" Here, in the middle of the moor, you know,"



" The stork at first believed it to be the princess turned a child again."

said father-stork, " is a kind of lake ; you can see a part of it if you stand up. There, by the reeds and the green quagmire, lies a great elder-stump. The three swans lighted on it, flapped their wings, and looked round them. Then one of them threw off her swan's plumage, and I saw it was our own

princess, of our house in Egypt. Then she sat down, and she had no other covering than her own long, black hair. I heard her ask the two others to take great care of her swan-skin while she plunged under the water to gather a flower which she thought she saw. They nodded, and lifted up the loose feather-dress. 'I wonder what they mean to do with it,' said I to myself ; and no doubt she asked them the same. And she got an answer, something she could see for herself. They flew aloft with her feather dress ! 'Sink down,' they cried ; 'you shall never fly in the swan-skin again ; never see Egypt again ! Stay in the moss !' And so they tore her feather-dress into a hundred pieces, till the feathers flew about as if it was snowing, and off flew the two good-for-nothing princesses."

"Oh, how dreadful !" said mother-stork. "I can't bear to hear it. But, tell me, what else happened ?"

"Our princess moaned and wept. Her tears fell on the elder-stump, and it was quite moved, for it was the Marsh King himself, who lives in the quagmire. I saw the stump turn itself, so it wasn't only a trunk, for it put out long, muddy boughs like arms. Then the unhappy girl was frightened, and sprang aside into the quivering marsh, which will not bear me, much less her. In at once she sank, and down with her went the elder-stump—it was he who pulled her down.

Then a few big black bubbles, and no trace of her left. She is engulfed in the marsh, and will never return to Egypt with her flower. You couldn't have borne to see it, mother ! ”

“ You shouldn't have told me anything of the sort just now ; it may affect the eggs. The princess can take good care of herself. She'll



“ Screamed passionately, and stretched out its arms and legs.”

get help easily enough. Had it been you or I, there would have been an end of us.”

“ However, I'll go day by day to see about it,” said father-stork ; and so he did.

The days and months went by. He saw at last one day that right from the bottom of the marsh a green stalk pushed up till it reached the surface of the water. Out of it grew a leaf, that grew wider and wider, and close to it a bud put out. Then one morning, as the stork was flying

THE MARSH KING'S DAUGHTER 191

over it, it opened, with the sun's warmth, into a full-blown flower, in the middle of which lay a beautiful child, a little girl, as if she were fresh from the bath. So like was the child to the princess from Egypt, that at first the stork believed it to be herself turned a child again. But when he thought it over, he decided that it was more likely to be the child of the princess and the Marsh King, and that was why she was lying in a water lily.

"She mustn't be left lying there," thought father-stork, "and there are too many already in my nest. But I have it! The Viking's wife has no children, and she has often wished for a little one. Yes, I get the name for bringing the babies; I will do it in sober truth for once! I'll fly to the Viking's wife with the child. They'll be delighted!"

So the stork took the little girl, flew to the log-house, made a hole with his beak in the window, with panes made of bladder, laid the child on the bosom of the Viking's wife, and flew away to mother-stork to tell her all about it. Her young ones heard it too, for they were now old enough.

"Listen; the princess is not dead. She has sent her little one up, and the child has a home found for her."

"Yes, so I said from the first," said mother-stork. "Now think a little about your own children. It's almost time for our journey. I begin to feel a tingling under my wings. The

cuckoo and the nightingale are off already, and I hear the quails chattering about it, and saying that we shall soon have a favourable wind. Our young ones are quite fit for training, I'm sure."

Glad indeed was the Viking's wife when she woke



"There, just at the foot of the bed, was a great ugly toad."

in the morning to find the beautiful little child near her side. She kissed and fondled it, but it screamed with passion, and threw out its arms

and legs, and seemed utterly miserable. At last it cried itself to sleep, and there it lay, one of the prettiest babies you could set eyes on.

The Viking's wife was so happy, so gay, so well, that she could not but hope that her husband and his men would return as suddenly as the little one had come, and so she and all her household busied themselves to get everything into order. The long coloured tapestries, which she and her maidens had woven with figures of their gods—Odin, Thor, Freya, as they were called—were hung up; the slaves were set to polish the old shields used for decoration; cushions were arranged on the benches, and dry wood placed on the hearth in the middle of the hall, so that the fire could be lit in a moment. The Viking's wife took her share in the work, so that by the evening she was very tired, and slept soundly.

When she woke towards daybreak she was terribly frightened. The little child had vanished! She sprang up, lighted a brand, and looked every where around. There, just at the foot of the bed where she had lain, was, not the baby, but a great ugly toad! In utter disgust at it she took a heavy stick to kill it, but the creature looked at her with such wonderfully sad eyes that she could not destroy it. Once more she gazed round; the toad uttered a faint, mournful croak. She started, and sprang from the bedside to the window, and opened it. At that moment the sun rose, and

cast its rays upon the bed and upon the great toad. All at once it seemed that the creature's wide mouth shrank, and became small and rosy ; the limbs filled out into the most charming shape. It was her own beautiful babe that lay there, not the hideous reptile !

"What is this ?" cried the dame. "Was it an ill dream ? Yes, there is my own sweet elfin child lying there !" She kissed it, and pressed it to her heart ; but it fought and bit like a wild kitten !

The Viking, however, did not come that day, nor the next ; for though he was on his way, the wind was against him as it blew to the south for the storks. Fair wind for one is foul for the other.

In those two days and nights the Viking's wife saw clearly how it was with her little child. And dreadful indeed was the spell that lay on it. By day it was as beautiful as an angel of light, but it had a bad, evil disposition. By night, on the other hand, it was a hideous toad, quiet, sad, with sorrowful eyes. It had two natures, which changed with its outward form. And so it was that the baby, brought by the stork, had by daylight its mother's own rightful shape, but its father's temper ; while again, night made the kinship with him evident in the bodily form, in which, however, dwelt the mother's mind and heart. Who could loose the spell cast by the



"The Viking's wife sat on the cross-bench in the open banqueting hall."

power of witchcraft? The Viking's wife was worn and distressed about it, and her heart was heavy for the unhappy being, of whose condition she did not think that she dared tell her husband if he came home then, for he would certainly follow the custom and practice of the time, and expose the poor child on the high road for any one that liked to take away. The good dame had not the heart to do this : her husband should see the child only by daylight.

One morning the wings of storks were heard above the roof. More than a hundred pairs of the birds had rested themselves for the night after their heavy exercise, and they now flew up, preparatory to starting southwards.

"All ready, and the wives and children?" was their cry.

"Oh, I'm so light," said the young storks. "My bones feel all kribly-krably, as if I was filled with live frogs! How splendid it is to have to go abroad!"

"Keep up in the flight," said father and mother, "and don't chatter so much; it tires the chest."

And they flew.

At the same moment a horn sounded over the moor. The Viking had landed with all his men, returning laden with booty from the coasts of Gaul, where the people, like those of Britain, used to chant in their terror: "From the rage of the Northmen, Lord, deliver us!" Guess what stir

and festival now came to the Viking's stronghold near the moor ! A barrel of mead was brought into hall ; a huge fire was lighted ; horses were slaughtered ; everything went duly. The heathen priest sprinkled the slaves with warm blood, to begin their new life ; the fire crackled ; the smoke curled under the roof ; the soot fell down from the beams—but they were used to that. Guests were invited, and received valuable gifts. Plots and treachery were forgotten ; they drank deep and threw the picked bones in each other's faces in good-humoured horse-play. The bard—a kind of musician, but a warrior as well, who went with them, saw their exploits, and sang about them—gave them a song in which they heard all their warrior-deeds and feats of prowess. Each verse ended with the refrain :

“ Wealth, kindred, life cannot endure,
But the warrior's glory standeth sure.”

And they all clashed upon their shields, and beat upon the table with knives and fists, and made great clamour.

The Viking's wife sat on the cross-bench in the open banqueting hall. She wore a robe of silk, with bracelets of gold and beads of amber. She had put on her dress of state, and the bard sang of her, and told of the golden treasure she had brought to her wealthy lord, while he was delighted with the beautiful child, for he could see it by day in all its loveliness. He was well pleased with

the baby's wildness, and said she would become a right warrior-maid, and fight as his champion. She did not even blink her eyes when a skilful hand cut her eyelashes with a sharp sword as a rough joke.

The barrel of mead was drained, and a second brought in, and all got well drunk, for they were folk who loved to drink their fill. They had a proverb: "The kine know when to go to stall from pasture, but the fool never knows when he has had enough." They knew it well enough, but know and do are different things. They had another proverb, too: "The dearest friend grows wearisome when he outstays his welcome." But on they stayed. Meat and mead are good: it was glorious!—and the slaves slept in the warm ashes, and dipped their fingers in the fat and licked them. Oh, it was a great time!

Once again that year the Viking went on a raid, though the autumn gales were rising. He led his men to the coast of Britain—"just over the water," he said; and his wife remained with the little girl. And truth to tell, the foster-mother soon grew fonder of the unhappy toad with the gentle eyes and deep sigh than of the beautiful child that fought and bit all about her.

The raw, dank autumn mist, "Mouthless," which devours the leaves lay over forest and moor; "Bird Featherless," as they called the snow, flew closely all around; winter was nigh at hand.



"The slaves slept for the night in the warm ashes."

The sparrows took the storks' nests for themselves, and criticized the ways of the late owners during their absence. And where were mother and father-stork and their young ones all the time ? Down in the land of Egypt, where the sun shone warm, as it does on a fine summer's day with us. Tamarinds and acacias bloomed round them ; the crescent of Mahomet gleamed bright from the cupolas of the mosques ; pairs and pairs of storks sat on the slender turrets, and rested after their long journey. Great flocks of them had built nest by nest on the huge pillars and broken arches of temples and forgotten cities. The date-palm. raised its foliage on high, as if to keep off the glare of the sun. Grey-white pyramids stood out against the clear sky across the desert, where the ostrich raced at speed, and the lion crouched with great, wise eyes, and saw the marble sphinx that lay half-buried in the sand. The Nile flood had retired ; the whole bed of the river was swarming with frogs, and to the stork family that was quite the best thing to be seen in the country. The young ones thought their eyes must be playing them tricks, it all seemed so wonderful.

" We always have it just like this in our warm country," said mother-stork ; and the young ones felt their appetites grow.

" Will there be anything more to see ? " said they. " Shall we go much farther into the country ? "

"There is nothing better to see," said mother-stork. "At that green border is only a wild wood, where the trees crowd one upon another, and are entangled together with thorny creepers. Only an elephant with his clumsy legs can make a way there. The snakes are too large for us, and the lizards too lively. If you try to go into the desert you get your eyes full of sand in fair weather, and if there is much wind, you find yourself buried under a sand-heap. No, this is the best place. Here are frogs and locusts. I shall stop here, and you must stay with me." And they stayed.

The old ones sat in their nest on the slender minaret and rested themselves, while yet they were busy preening their feathers and rubbing their beaks on their red-stockinged legs. They would raise their necks, bow gravely, and hold up their heads with their high foreheads, fine, smooth feathers, and brown eyes glancing sharply. The young hen-storks walked gravely about among the coarse reeds, stealing glances at the other young storks, and devouring a frog at every third step, or else a small snake, which they found so good for their health, and so tasty. The young males began to quarrel, beat each other with their wings, pecked, yes, stabbed till the blood flowed! And so one and another got betrothed, for that was the whole purpose of life. They built nests, and from that sprang new quarrels, for in hot countries tempers are so quick! Nevertheless,

it was all delightful, especially to the old ones. Everything that one's own youngsters do becomes them. Every day there was sunshine ; every day was so much taken up with eating that there was hardly time to think of amusement.



"All his limbs rigid and stretched out like a mummy." "She is dead and gone!"

But inside the rich palace of their Egyptian landlord, as they called him, joy was unknown. Rich and mighty lord, there he lay on a couch, his limbs rigid, stretched out like a mummy, in the midst of the great hall with its many-coloured walls ; it looked just as if he was lying in a tulip. His kinsmen and servants stood around him ; he was not dead ; you could not call him alive ; he existed. The healing moss-flower from the northern land, which should have been searched for and gathered by her who loved him most dearly, would never be brought. His young and beautiful daughter, who flew in swan's-plumage over sea and land, far towards the north, would never return.

the two swan-maidens had told him on their return. They had invented a whole history of it. Said they :—

“ We all three flew high in the air : a hunter saw us and shot an arrow ; it struck our friend, and singing her farewell, like a dying swan, she slowly sank, in the midst of a forest lake. There we buried her, near the shore of the lake, under a fragrant weeping-birch. But we took our revenge ! We bound fire under the wings of a swallow which had built under the hunter's thatched roof ! The thatch caught ; the house blazed up ! He was burned in it, and the light shone over the lake as far as the drooping birch tree under which she is buried. She will never come back to the land of Egypt.”

And so they both wept ; and the father-stork, when he heard it, chattered with his beak till it rattled again.

“ Lies and make-up ! ” said he. “ I have a great mind to drive my beak into their hearts.”

“ And break it off ! ” said mother-stork. “ And what good would that do ? Think first of yourself and your own family ; everything else is of no consequence ! ”

“ However, I will seat myself on the edge of the open court in the morning, when all the learned doctors are met to talk about the illness. Perhaps they will come a little nearer the truth.”

And the learned doctors came together, and

talked and talked all about, so that the stork could not make head or tail of it—nor did anything come



“ We bound fire under the wings of a swallow.”

of it for the sickness, or for the daughter in the moor ; but, nevertheless, we shall be glad to hear

something about it, for we are obliged to listen to a great deal.

But now it will be a very good thing to learn what had gone before this meeting, in order to understand the story better, for at least we know as much as father-stork.

"Love brings life! The highest love supports the highest life! Only through love will he be able to secure the preservation of his life!" was what they said; and very wisely and well said it was, according to the learned.

"That's a pretty thought!" said father-stork.

"I don't rightly understand it!" said mother-stork, "and it isn't my fault, but the expressions! However, be that as it may, I've something else to think about!"

Then the learned men had spoken of love for one thing to another, of the difference there is between the affection of lovers and that of parent and child; of the love of plant and sunbeam, where the rays of the sun touch the bud and the young shoot thus comes forth—all this was expounded at such great length and in so learned a way that it was impossible for father-stork to follow it, much less to repeat it. He was quite thoughtful about it, and half closed his eyes and stood on one leg a whole day afterwards; such learning was too heavy for him to bear.

However, he understood one thing. He had heard both the common folk and those of the

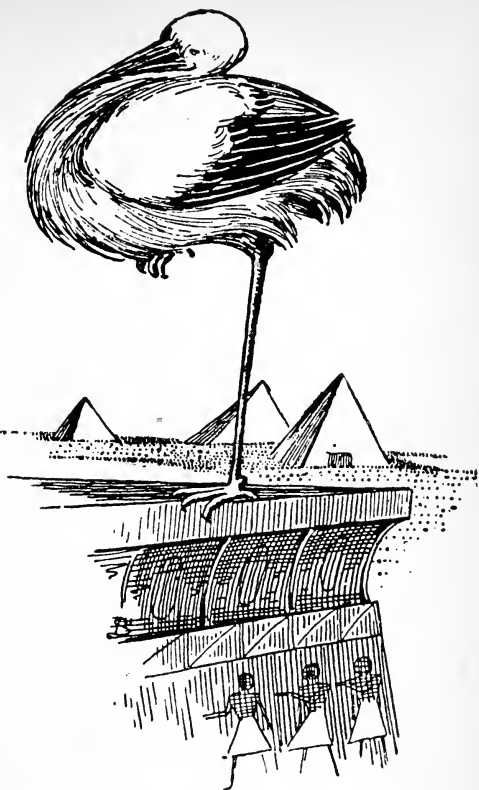
highest rank say the same thing from the bottom of their hearts—that it was a great misfortune for thousands of people, for the country at large, that this man should be ill and not recover ; it would be a joy and blessing if he were restored to health. “ But where does the flower of health grow for him ? ” that was what they had all inquired. They sought it from the scrolls of wisdom, from the twinkling stars, and from the winds ; they had asked in all byways where they might find it, and at last the learned and wise announced, as we have said : “ Love brings forth life, the life of a father,” and so they said more than they themselves understood. They repeated it, and wrote it as a prescription : “ Love brings forth life ” ; but how was the thing to be done from this prescription ? There lay the difficulty. At length they came to an agreement about it ; the help must come from the princess, who was attached to her father with her whole soul and heart. And then they decided how it was to be brought about (all this was more than a year and a day before) : she must go by night, at the new moon, to the marble sphinx near the desert, must clear away the sand from the door with her feet, and then go through the long passage that led into the middle of one of the great pyramids, where in his mummy-case lay one of the mighty kings of old, surrounded by splendour and magnificence. Here she was to hold her ear to the lips of the dead, and then it

would be revealed to her how she was to gain life and health for her father.

All this she had done, and had learned in vision that, from the deep marsh in the land of Denmark, a spot most clearly indicated, she might bring home the marsh-flower, which there in the depth of the water had touched her breast. Then he would be healed.

So she flew in swan's plumage from the land of Egypt to the moor.

You see, father-stork and mother-stork were aware of all this, and now we know the story more fully than before. We remember that the Marsh King dragged her down to him; we know



"He stood on one leg."

that for those at home she is dead and gone ; only the wisest of them all said still, with mother-stork : " She takes good care of herself ! " and they were obliged to wait, for that was all they knew about it.

" I believe I can steal the swans' plumage from the two good-for-nothing princesses ! " said father-stork, " then they will not be able to go to the moor to work mischief. I will hide the swans' skins themselves till they are wanted."

" Where will you hide them ? " asked mother-stork.

" In our nest on the moor ! " said he. " I and the youngest of our brood can be helped along with them, and if they are troublesome to us, there are plenty of places on the way where we can hide them till next time of moving. One swan's dress would be enough for her, but two are better ; it is well to have plenty of luggage in a northern climate ! "

" You will get no thanks for it ! " said mother-stork. " However, you are the master. I have nothing to say, except when I am sitting."

* * * * *

In the Viking's stronghold near the moor, whither the storks flew at the spring, the little girl had received her name. They had called her Helga, but that was far too sweet for such a disposition as the one possessed by this most beautiful child. Month after month it became

more evident, and as years went by—whilst the storks pursued the same journey, in autumn towards the Nile, in spring towards the moor—the little child became a grown girl, and before people thought of it, she was in her sixteenth year, and the most beautiful of maidens. But the fruit was a beautiful shell, the kernel hard and rough



"She was to hold her ear to the lips of the dead."

She was wilder than most people even in that hard, gloomy age.

It was a delight to her to splash with her white hands in the hot blood of the horse which had been slaughtered as a sacrifice ; in her wildness she bit off the neck of the black cock which should have been slain by the heathen priest ; and she said in sober earnest to her foster-father :—

"If thine enemy came and tied a rope to the beams of the roof, and lifted it over thy chamber,

whilst thou wast asleep, I should not wake thee, even if I could ! I would not hear it, my blood still so hums in my ears where thou didst slap me years ago ! Thou ! I remember ! ”

But the Viking did not believe what she said ; he was, like the others, infatuated with her beauty ; and he did not know how disposition and appearance changed in little Helga. She would sit without a saddle, as if she had grown to the horse, when it galloped at full speed ; and she would not leap off, even when it fought with other vicious horses. In all her clothes she would often cast herself from the bank into the strong current of the fjord and swim to meet the Viking when his boat was steering towards the land. She cut off the longest lock from her beautiful long hair, and made it into a string for her bow. “ Self-made is well made ! ” she said.

The Viking's wife, according to the age and custom, was strong in will and in disposition, but towards the daughter she seemed a mild, anxious woman, for she knew that the dreadful child was bewitched.

When her mother stood on the balcony, or walked out into the courtyard, it seemed as if Helga took an evil delight in placing herself on the edge of the well, extending her arms and legs, and then leaping plump into the narrow, deep hole, where she, with her frog-nature, dived, and rose again, crawled out, just as if she was a cat,

and came, dripping with water, into the lofty hall, so that the green leaves which were scattered on the floor floated about in the watery stream.

But there was one bond that restrained little Helga, and that was the dusk of the evening. Then she became quiet and pensive, and would allow herself to be called and led. She seemed to be drawn by some internal feeling to her mother, and when the sun went down and the transformation without and within her took place, she sat there quiet and melancholy, shrunken together into the figure of a toad. Her body, indeed, was now far larger than that creature's, but it was only so much the more disgusting. She looked like a miserable dwarf with frog's head, and web between the fingers. There was something of the deepest melancholy in the expression of her eyes; she had no voice but a hollow moan, just like a child that sobs in its dreams. The Viking's wife could then take her on her knees: she forgot the ugly form, and looked only at the sorrowful eyes, and more than once she said:—

“I could wish almost that thou wast always my dumb frog-child! Thou art more frightful to look at when thy beauty returns to thee.”

And she wrote runes against witchcraft and disease, and cast them over the wretched girl, but she saw no change.

“Now that she is a full-grown woman, and so like the Egyptian mother,” said father-stork,

"one could not believe that she was once so little that she lay in a water-lily. We have never seen her mother since! She did not take care of herself, as you and the learned men thought



Then the Viking's wife could take her on her knees."

Year out, year in, I have flown now in all directions over the moor, but she has never made any sign. Yes, let me tell you that every year when I have

come up here some days ahead of you, to mend the nest and put one thing and another straight, I have flown for a whole night, like an owl or a bat, to and fro over the open water, but it was no use! Nor have the two swan-dresses been any use which the young ones and I dragged hither from the land of the Nile. Toilsome work it was, and it took us three journeys to do it. They have now lain for many years at the bottom of the nest, and if such a disaster as a fire should happen at any time, and the log-house be burnt, they would be lost!"

"And our good nest would be lost also!" said mother-stork. "You think too little of that, and too much of the feather-dress, and your moss-princess! You had better take it to her and stay in the bog! You are a useless father to your own family; I have said that ever since I sat on an egg for the first time! I only hope that we or our young ones may not get an arrow in the wing from that mad Viking girl! She does not know what she is doing. We have lived here a little longer than she, she should remember! We never forget our obligations; we pay our taxes yearly, a feather, an egg, and a young one, as is right. Do you think, when she is outside, I feel inclined to go down there, as in the old days, and as I do in Egypt, where I am half a companion with them, without their forgetting me, and peep into tub and pot? No, I sit up here worrying

myself about her—the hussy!—and about you too! You ought to have let her lie in the water-



“ ‘ But he is still the handsomest of them all,’ said the mother-stork.”

lily, and there would have been an end of her!”
“ You are kinder than your words!” said

father-stork. "I know you better than you know yourself."

And so he gave a jump, two heavy strokes of his wings, stretched his legs behind him, and off he flew. He sailed away, without moving his wings. At a good distance off he gave a powerful stroke ; the sun shone on his white feathers ; he stretched his neck and head forward ! That was speed and flight !

"But he is still the handsomest of them all !" said the mother-stork, "only I don't tell him that."

* * * * *

Early that autumn the Viking came home with spoil and captives. Among these was a young Christian priest, one of those men who preached against the idols of the northern countries. Often at that period did the talk in the hall and in the bower of the women refer to the new faith, which had made its way into all the countries of the south, and by the holy Anskarius had been brought even to Haddeby on the Schlei. Helga herself had heard of the faith in the White Christ, who out of love to men had given Himself to save them ; but for her, as they say, it had gone in at one ear and out at the other. She seemed to have only a perception of that word "love" when she crouched in that closed room in her miserable frog-form. But the Viking's wife had listened to it, and felt herself wonderfully affected by the

story and traditions of the Son of the only true God. The men, on coming home from their expedition, had told of the splendid temples of costly hewn stone, erected for Him whose message was love ; and they brought home with them a pair of heavy golden vessels, elaborately pierced, and with a fragrant odour about them, for they



" Drove the knife into its side."

were censers, which the Christian priests used to swing before the altar where no blood was ever shed, but wine and consecrated bread changed into His body and blood who had given Himself for generations yet unborn.

In the deep paved cellar of the log house the young captive Christian priest was confined, his feet and hands securely bound. The Viking's

wife said that he was "as fair as Baldur," and she was touched by his distress ; but young Helga wished that a rope should be drawn through his legs, and that he should be tied to the tails of wild oxen.

"Then I would set the dogs loose. Halloo ! away over bog and fen, out to the moor ! That would be jolly to see ! jollier still to be able to follow him on his course ! "

But the Viking did not choose that he should be put to death that way, but, as a denier and opposer of the high gods, he should be offered the next morning on the blood-stone in the grove—the first time that a human sacrifice had been offered there.

Young Helga asked that she might sprinkle the images of the gods and the people with his blood. She sharpened her gleaming knife, and when one of the great, ferocious dogs, of which there were a good many in the court-yard, ran across her feet, she drove the knife into its side. "That is to test it," said she ; and the Viking's wife looked sadly at the wild, ill-tempered girl, and, when the night came, and the beautiful bodily form of her daughter was changed for the beauty of soul, she spoke glowing words of sorrow to her from her own afflicted spirit.

The hideous toad with the goblin's body stood before her, and fixed its brown, sorrowful eyes on her ; listening and seeming to understand with the intelligence of a human being.



"Went away wrathful and sad."

"Never, even to my husband, has a word fallen from my tongue about the twofold nature I endure in thee," said the Viking's wife. "There is more pity in my heart for thee than I could have believed! Great is the love of a mother; but affection never comes into thy mind! Thy heart is like the cold clod! Whence didst thou then come into my house?"

At that the hideous form trembled and shook. It seemed as if the word touched some connexion between body and soul; great tears came into its eyes.

"Thy bitter trial will come some time!" said the Viking's wife; "and terrible will it be for me! Better hadst thou been abandoned on the highway as a child, and the night-frost had lulled thee into death!" And the Viking's wife wept bitter tears, and, wrathful and sad, passed behind the loose curtains which hung over the beam and divided the room.

The shrunken toad sat alone in the corner. There was silence, but after a short interval there came from her breast a half-smothered sigh. It was as if, painfully, a soul awoke to life in a corner of her heart. She took one step forward, listened, took another step, and then with her awkward hands she seized the heavy bar that was placed before the door. Gently she put it back, and quietly she drew out the peg that was stuck in over the latch. She took the lighted lamp that

stood in front of the rooms; it seemed as if a strong will gave her power. She drew the iron pin out of the bolted shutter, and moved gently towards the prisoner. He was asleep. She touched him with her cold, damp hand, and when he awoke and saw that hideous form, he shuddered, as if at an evil vision. She drew her knife, severed his bonds, and made signs to him to follow her.

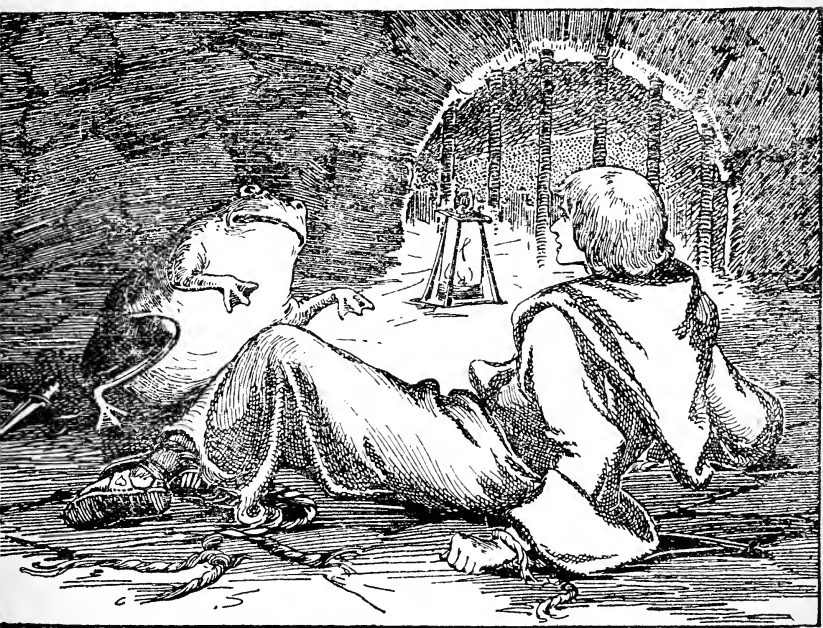
He called upon the holy Name, made the sign of the cross, and as the figure stood unchanged, he repeated the words of the Bible :—

“ ‘The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive : the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.’ Who art thou ? Whence is this reptile shape that yet is so full of deeds of compassion ? ”

The toad-figure beckoned and guided him behind sheltering curtains by a solitary way out to the stable, pointed at a horse ; he mounted it, and she seated herself before him and held on by the mane of the animal. The prisoner understood her, and they rode away at a quick trot, by a path he would never have discovered, out to the open heath.

He forgot her hideous form, for the favour and mercy of the Lord were acting through this hobgoblin. He offered up pious prayers, and began to sing holy songs ; and she trembled ; was it the power of the prayers and hymns that acted upon her ? or was it the coldness of the morning which was so quickly coming ? What was it that she felt ? She raised herself up in

the breeze, and wished to stop the horse and spring off ; but the Christian priest held her fast with all his strength, and sang aloud a Psalm, as if that would have power to loose the spell that held her in that hideous frog shape, and the horse



“ ‘ Who art thou ? ’ ”

galloped forward yet more wildly. The heaven became red ; the first ray of the sun shot through the cloud, and with that clear spring of light came the change of form—she was the beautiful young girl with the demoniac, evil temper ! In

his arms he held a peerless maiden, and in utter terror he sprang from the horse and stopped it, for he thought he was encountering a new and deadly witchcraft. But young Helga at the same time leapt to the ground ; the short child's frock reached only to her knees ; she drew the sharp knife from her belt, and rushed at the startled man.

" Let me get at you ! " she cried ; " let me get at you, and you shall feel the knife. Yes, you are as pale as hay ! Slave ! Beardless boy ! "

She pressed him hard ; they were engaged in a severe conflict, but it was as if an unseen power gave strength to the Christian. He held her fast, and the old oak tree hard by came to his help, for its roots, half loosened from the earth, caught her feet as they slipped under them. A spring gushed forth quite close to them ; he sprinkled her with the fresh water on breast and face, and charged the unclean spirit to come out of her, signing her with the cross, according to the Christian rite. But the water of baptism had no power there, where the spring of faith had not yet arisen within.

Yet herein also was he strong ; more than a man's strength against the rival power of evil lay in his act, and as if it overwhelmed her, she dropped her arms, looked with a surprised glance and pale cheeks at him, who seemed a powerful sorcerer, strong in wizardry and secret lore. They

were dark runes which he spoke, mystic signs which he was making in the air ! She would not have blinked if he had swung an axe or a sharp knife before her eyes, but she did when he made the sign of the cross on her forehead and breast ;



" The horse galloped on."

she now sat like a tame bird, her head bowed down on her bosom.

Gently he told her of the work of love she had done for him in the night, that she had come in the hideous skin of a frog, and had loosed his bonds, and brought him out to light and life. He said that she also was bound—bound in a closer bondage than he had been, but she, too, with him should come to light and life. He would bring her to Haddeby, to the holy Anskarius. There, in the

Christian city, the enchantment would be broken. But he would not dare to carry her in front of him on the horse, although she herself was willing to sit there.

“ You must sit behind me on the horse, not in front of me ! Thy witch-beauty has a power that is from the evil one. I dread it—and yet there is victory for me in Christ ! ”

He bent his knees and prayed gently and earnestly. It was as if the silent glades of the forest were consecrated thereby into a holy church. The birds began to sing as if they belonged to a new brotherhood ; the mint poured forth its fragrance as if it would take the place of incense. The priest proclaimed aloud the words of Holy Writ :—

“ ‘ The Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace ! ’ ”

And he spoke about the longing of the whole Creation and whilst he spoke the horse, which had carried them in its wild race, stood quiet, and shook the great brambles, so that the ripe, juicy berries fell on little Helga's hand, offering themselves for her refreshment.

Patiently she let herself be lifted on to the back of the horse, and sat there like one walks in his sleep, who is not awake, but yet is not moving in his dream. The Christian fastened two boughs



" Rode through the forest."

together with a strip of bark to form a cross, and held it aloft in his hands. So they rode through the forest, which became denser as the way grew deeper, or rather, there was no way at all. Sloes grew across the path ; one was obliged to ride around them. The spring did not become a running brook, but a standing bog, and one had to ride around that. There was strength and refreshment in the fresh forest air ; there was not less power in the word of gentleness which sounded in faith and Christian love, in the heartfelt desire to bring the possessed to light and life.

They say that the drops of rain can hollow the hard stone, the billows of the sea can in time wear smooth the broken, sharp-edged pieces of rock. The dew of Grace, which had descended upon little Helga, pierced the hardness and rounded the ruggedness of her nature, although it was not yet evident, and she was not yet aware of it herself. But what does the germ in the earth know of the refreshing moisture and the warm rays of the sun, while yet it is hiding within itself plant and flower ?

As a mother's song for her child imperceptibly fastens itself into its mind, and it babbles single words after her, without understanding them, although they afterwards collect themselves in its thoughts, and become clear in the course of time, so in her the Word worked which is able to create.

They rode out of the forest, away over the heath,

again through pathless forest, and towards evening they met some robbers.

"Where have you stolen that fair maiden?" they shouted; they stopped the horse, and snatched the two riders from it, for they were strong men. The priest had no other weapon than the knife which he had taken from little Helga to defend himself with; one of the robbers swung his axe, but the young Christian avoided it, and lightly sprang aside, or he would have been struck; but the edge of the axe sank deep into the horse's neck, so that the blood streamed out, and the animal fell to the earth. Then little Helga started, as if awakened out of a long, deep meditation, and threw herself down on the expiring animal. The Christian priest placed himself before her in order to defend her, but one of the robbers dashed a ponderous iron mace against his forehead, crushing it. The blood and brains spurted around, and he fell dead to the earth.

The robbers seized little Helga by her white arm. At that moment the sun went down, and as the last ray faded, she was changed to a hideous toad. Her greenish mouth opened across half her face; her arms became thin and slimy, and her hands grew broad and covered with webbing. Terror seized the robbers at the sight. She stood among them, a hideous monster; then, frog-like hopped away, with bounds higher than she was herself, and vanished in the thicket. The robbers

knew it for an evil trick of Loge, or secret magic art, and hurried away in affright.

* * * * *

The full moon was already rising, and soon shone forth in splendour, and little Helga crept forth from the thicket in the skin of a wretched toad. She stood by the bodies of the Christian priest and of the horse, and she looked at them with eyes that seemed to weep. Her frog's head uttered a moan like a child beginning to cry. She threw herself now upon one, now upon the other ; she took water in her hand, which the webbed skin had made larger and more hollow, and poured it over them. They were dead, and would remain dead ; she understood that. Wild animals would soon come and devour their bodies ; but that must not be ! So she dug in the earth as deep as she could. To open a grave for them was her wish, but she had nothing to dig it with except a strong bough of a tree and her weak hands ; but on them there was webbing stretched between her fingers. She tore it, and the blood flowed. These means would be of no use, she could see. Then she took water and washed the dead man's face, covered it with fresh green leaves, fetched great boughs and laid them over him, shook leaves between them, then took the heaviest stones she was able to lift, laid them over the dead bodies, and filled up the openings with moss. Then the mound seemed strong and protected, but this arduous

task had occupied the entire night—the sun now burst forth, and little Helga stood in all her beauty, with bleeding hands, and, for the first time, with tears on her flushed maiden cheeks.

In this transformation, it seemed as if the two natures struggled within her. She trembled, and gazed around her as if she had awoke from a frightful dream. Running to a slender beech, she held fast to it for support, then climbed to the top of the tree, as lithely as a cat, and clung fast to it. There she sat like a frightened squirrel, sat there all through the long day in the deep solitude of the forest, where all is still and death-like as they say. Yet a pair of butterflies fluttered about at play or in quarrel; there were ant-hills close by with many hundreds of busy little creatures that crowded backwards and forwards. Countless gnats danced in the air, swarm upon swarm; hosts of buzzing



"Sat there all through the long day."

flies chased each other about ; birds, dragon-flies, and other small winged creatures filled the air. The earth-worm crept out from the moist soil, the mole raised itself above the ground. In all else it was still and death-like around, or what one calls death-like indeed ! Nothing took any notice of little Helga, except the jays, which flew screaming around the top of the tree where she was sitting. They jumped along the branches near her in daring inquisitiveness. One glance of her eye was enough to chase them away again ; but they could not quite make her out, neither could she understand herself.

When evening was near, and the sun began to go down, her approaching change called her to movement again. She let herself slide down from the tree, and when the last ray of the sun disappeared, she sat there in the toad's shrunken form, with the webbed skin of her hands lacerated, but her eyes now sparkled with a brilliancy of beauty which they had scarcely possessed before, even in her beautiful human shape. They were now the gentle eyes of a pious maiden that looked from behind the reptile's outward shape, and told of a deepened mind, of a true human heart. The beautiful eyes swam with tears, heavy tears that relieved her heart.

The cross of boughs bound together with a strip of bark, the last work of him who now lay dead and buried, was still lying on the grave she had made.

Little Helga now took it, at some unprompted impulse, and planted it amongst the stones, over him and the slain horse. The sadness of the recollection brought tears to her eyes, and with the grief in her heart she traced the same sign in the earth around the grave that so honourably enclosed the dead. As with both hands she traced the sign of the cross, the webbing fell off like a torn glove! She washed herself in the water of the spring, and looked with astonishment at her fine white hands. Again made the sign of the cross in the air between herself and the grave; her lips quivered, her tongue moved, and that Name, which she had heard pronounced most frequently on her ride through the forest, came audibly from her mouth—she said, “Jesus Christ!”

The toad's skin fell off: she was a beautiful young maiden; but her head drooped wearily, her limbs needed repose—she slept.

Her slumber was short; at midnight she awoke. The dead horse was standing before her, shining, and full of life, that gleamed in light from its eyes and from its wounded neck. Close by she saw the murdered Christian priest, “more beautiful than Baldur!” as the Viking's wife would have said; and he appeared surrounded with a glory of fire.

There was an earnest look in his large, gentle eyes, just and searching, so penetrating a gaze that it seemed to shine into the inmost recesses

of her heart. Little Helga trembled before it, and her memory was awakened with a power as if it was the Day of Judgment. Every kind action that had been done for her, every kindly word that had been spoken to her, seemed endued with life ; she understood that it was mercy which had taken care of her during her days of trial, in which the child of spirit and clay works and strives. She owned that she had only followed the bent of her own desire, and had done nothing on her own part. Everything had been given to her, everything had been allowed, so to speak. She bowed herself humbly, ashamed before Him who alone can read the hidden things of the heart ; and in that instant there seemed to come to her a fiery touch of purifying flame—the flame of the Holy Spirit.

“Thou daughter of the mire,” said the Christian priest, “from the mire, from the earth thou art sprung ; from earth thou shalt again arise. The fire within thee returns in personality to its source ; the ray is not from the sun, but from God. No soul shall perish, but far distant is the time when life shall be merged in eternity. I come from the land of the dead ; so shalt



“Looked with astonishment at her fine white hands.”

thou at some time travel through the deep valley to the shining hill-country, where grace and fullness dwell. I may not lead thee to Hadde for Christian baptism. First thou must burst the water-shield over the deep moorland, and draw up the living root that gave thee life and cradled thee. Thou must do thy work before the consecration may come to thee."

And he lifted her on to the horse, handed her a golden censer, like that which she had seen in the Viking's castle, from which there came a sweet, strong fragrance. The open wound on the forehead of the slain shone like a radiant diadem. He took the cross from the grave, raised it on high; and now they went off through the air, over the rustling forest, then over the mounds where the warriors were buried, sitting on their dead steeds; and these majestic forms arose, and rode out



"The Christian priest raised his cross on high."

to the tops of the hills. A broad golden hoop with a gold knob gleamed on their foreheads in the moonlight, and their cloaks fluttered in the wind. The dragon that sits and broods over treasure raised its head, and looked after them. Dwarfs peered forth from the hills, and the furrows swarmed with red, blue, and green lights, like a cluster of sparks in a burnt piece of paper.

Away over wood and heath, stream and pool, they flew to the moor, and floated over that in great circles. The Christian priest raised the cross on high ; it shone like gold, and from his lips came the eucharistic chant. Little Helga sang with him, as a child joins in the song of its mother. She swung the censer, and there came a fragrance as if from an altar, so powerful, so subtly operating, that the rushes and reeds of the moor put forth their flowers. All the germs sprang up from the deep soil ; everything that had life arose. A veil of water-lilies spread itself like an embroidered carpet of flowers, and on it lay a sleeping woman, young and beautiful. Little Helga thought she saw herself mirrored in the still water ; but it was her mother that she saw, the Marsh King's wife, the princess from the waters of the Nile.

The dead Christian priest bade the sleeper be lifted on to the horse ; but that sank under the burden as if its body was only a winding-sheet flying in the breeze ; but the sign of the cross made

the airy phantom strong, and all three rode to the firm ground.

A cock crowed in the Viking's stronghold. The phantoms rose up in the mist, and were dispersed in the wind, but mother and daughter stood there together.

"Is that myself that I see in the deep water?" said the mother.



"Lay a sleeping woman."

"Is that myself that I see in the bright shield?" exclaimed the daughter; and they came close together, breast to breast in each other's arms. The mother's heart beat strongest, and she understood it all.

"My child! My own heart's flower! My lotus from the deep waters!"

And she embraced her child, and wept over her; and the tears were as a baptism of new life and affection for little Helga.

“I came hither in a swan’s skin, and I took it off,” said the mother. “I sank through the quivering swamp, deep into the mire of the bog, that enclosed me as with a wall. But soon I found a fresher current about me ; a power seemed to draw me ever deeper and deeper. I felt a pressure of sleep on my eyelids ; I slept, I dreamt—I seemed to lie again in the pyramids of Egypt ; but there still stood before me the moving elder-stump, which had frightened me on the surface of the moor. I looked at the crevices in the bark, and they shone forth in colours and became hieroglyphics—it was the case of a mummy which I was looking at. That burst, and out of it stepped a lord a thousand years old, a mummy form, black as pitch, shining black like a wood-snail or the slimy black mud—the Marsh King, or the mummy of the pyramid, I did not know which. He flung his arms about me, and I felt that I should die. When I first returned to life again, and my breast became warm, there was a little bird which beat its wings, and twittered and sang. It flew up from my breast towards the dark, heavy roof, but a long green band still fastened it to me. I heard and understood its longing notes : ‘ Liberty ! sunshine ! to my father ! ’ Then I thought of my father in the sun-lit land of my home, my life, my affection ! and I loosed the band and let him flutter away—home to his father. Since that hour I have not dreamed ; I slept a long and heavy

sleep till the moment when the sounds and fragrance arose and raised me."

That green band from the mother's heart to the bird's wings, whither had it passed now ? where was



"In the hideous form of a toad, trembling and nestling up against her foster-mother."

it lying cast away ? Only the stork had seen it. The band was that green stalk ; the knot was that shining flower which served as a cradle for the child who now had grown in beauty, and again reposed near the mother's heart.

And whilst they stood there in close embrace, the father-stork flew in circles about them, made speed to his nest, fetched from thence the feather dresses kept for so many years and threw one over each of them ; and they flew, and raised themselves from the earth like two white swans.

“ Let us talk,” said father-stork “ now that we can understand each other’s speech, although the beak is cut differently on one bird and on the other ! It is the most lucky thing possible that you came to-night. In the morning we should have been off, mother, and I, and the young ones ! We are flying to the South ! Yes, look at me ! I am an old friend from the land of the Nile, and that is the mother ; she has more in her heart than in her chatter. She always believed that the princess was only taking care of herself. I and the young ones have brought the swan-skins here. Well, how glad I am ! And what a fortunate thing it is that I am here still ! At daybreak we shall set off, a large party of storks. We fly in front ; you can fly behind, and then you will not mistake the way. I and the young ones will then be able to keep an eye upon you ! ”

“ And the lotus flower, that I ought to bring,” said the Egyptain princess, “ it flies in swan’s plumage by my side ! I have the flower of my heart with me ; thus it has released itself. Homeward ! homeward ! ”

But Helga said that she could not leave the

land of Denmark till she had once more seen her foster-mother, the kind wife of the Viking. In Helga's thoughts came up every beautiful remembrance, every affectionate word, every tear which her foster-mother had shed, and it almost seemed at that instant as if she clung closest to that mother.

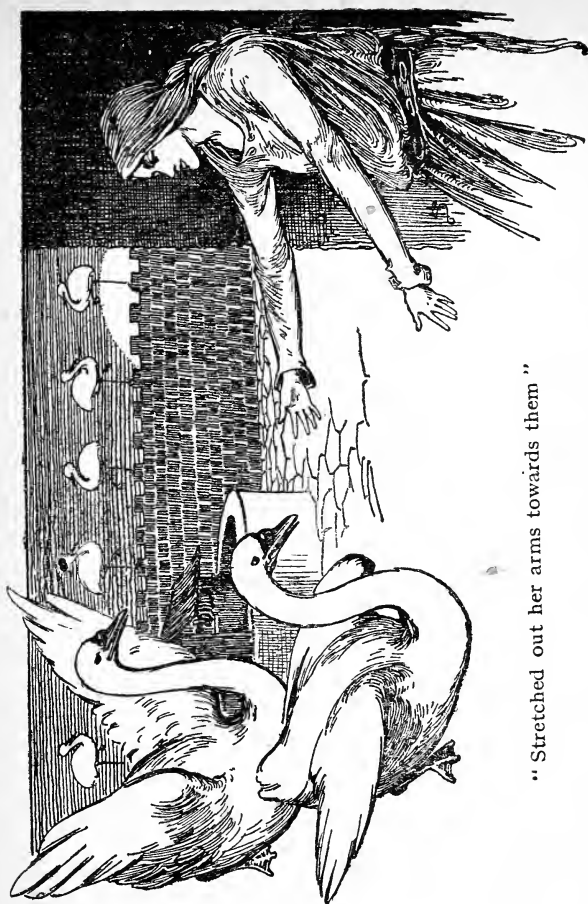
"Yes, we will go to the Viking's house," said the stork-father. "There I expect mother and the young ones. How they will open their eyes and chatter about it! Yes, mother doesn't say so very much; what she does is short and pithy, and so she thinks the best! I will sound the rattle directly, so that she will hear we are coming."

And so father-stork chattered his beak, and flew with the swans to the Viking's stronghold.

Every one there was lying deep in slumber. The Viking's wife had not gone to rest till late that night; she was still in fear for little Helga, who had disappeared three days ago with the Christian priest. She must have helped him to escape, for it was her horse that was missing from the stable. By what power had all this been brought about? The Viking's wife thought about the wonderful works which she had heard were performed by the White Christ, and by those who believed in Him and followed Him. Her changing thoughts shaped themselves into a dream. It appeared to her that she was still sitting on her bed, awake,

and meditating, and that darkness shrouded everything outside. A storm arose ; she heard the rolling of the sea in the west and the east, from the North Sea and the waters of the Cattegat. That huge serpent which encircles the earth in the depths of the ocean shook convulsively ; it was Ragnarök, the twilight of the gods, as the heathen called the last hour, when everything should pass away, even the high gods themselves. The trumpet sounded, and the gods rode forth over the rainbow, arrayed in steel, to take part in the last contest. Before them flew the winged warrior-maidens, and behind them in array marched the forms of dead warriors. The whole sky was illuminated by the northern lights, but the darkness again prevailed. It was an appalling hour.

And close by the frightened Viking's wife little Helga sat on the floor in the hideous form of a toad, trembling and nestling herself up against her foster-mother, who took her on her lap and affectionately held her fast, although she seemed more hideous than a toad. The air was full of the sound of sword-strokes and the blows of maces, of arrows whizzing, as if a furious hail-storm was raging above them. The hour had come when earth and heaven should fail, the stars should fall, and everything be burned up in the fire of Surtr ; but the dreamer knew that a new earth and heaven would come, and the corn wave where the sea now rolled over the barren



“ Stretched out her arms towards them ”

sand bottom ; that the God who cannot be named rules, and up to Him rose Baldur, the gentle and kind, loosed from the realm of death. He came—the Viking's wife saw him, and knew his face. It was the captive Christian priest.

“ White Christ ! ” she cried aloud ; and as she mentioned that Name she pressed a kiss on the hideous forehead of her frog-child ; the toad's skin fell off, and little Helga stood there in all her beauty, gentle as she had never been before, and with beaming eyes. She kissed her foster-mother's hands, blessed her for all her care and affection with which she had surrounded her in the days of her distress and trial ; thanked her for the thoughts to which she had given birth in her ; thanked her for mentioning the Name which she repeated, “ White Christ ! ” and then little Helga rose up as a noble swan, her wings expanded themselves wide, wide, with a rustling as when a flock of birds of passage flies away !

With that the Viking's wife awoke, and still heard outside the same strong sound of wings. She knew that it was time for the storks to depart, and no doubt that was what she heard. Still, she wished to see them once before their journey, and to bid them farewell. She stood up, went out on to the balcony, and there she saw on the ridge of the out-house rows of storks, and round the courtyard and over the lofty trees crowds of others were flying in great circles. But straight

in front of her, on the edge of the well, where little Helga had so often sat and frightened her with her wildness, two swans now sat and looked at her with intelligent eyes. Her dream came to her mind ; it still quite filled her as if it had been reality. She thought of little Helga in the form of a swan, she thought of the Christian priest, and she felt a strange joy in her heart.

The swans beat their wings, and bent their necks, as if they wished so to salute her ; and the Viking's wife stretched out her arms towards them as if she understood, and smiled at them through her tears.

Then, with a noise of wings and chattering, all the storks arose to start on their journey to the south.

"We cannot wait for the swans !" said mother-stork. "If they wish to come with us they may ; but we can't wait here till the plovers start ! It is a very good thing to travel in family parties ; not like the chaffinches and ruffs, where the males fly by themselves and the females by themselves ; that is certainly not proper ! And what are those swans flapping their wings for ?"

"Every one flies in his own way !" said father-stork. "The swans go in slanting line, the cranes in a triangle, and the plovers in a wavy, snake-like line."

"Don't mention serpents when we are flying up here !" said mother-stork ; "it only excites

the appetites of our young ones when they can't be satisfied."

* * * * *

"Are those the high mountains down there which I have heard of?" asked Helga in the swan's skin.

"Those are thunder-clouds which drive below us," said the mother.

"What are those white clouds which lift themselves so high?" asked Helga.

"Those are the everlasting snow-clad hills which you see," said the mother; and they flew over the Alps, down towards the blue Mediterranean.

* * * * *

"Land of Africa! Coast of Egypt!" jubilantly sang the daughter of the Nile in her swan form, when, high in the air, she descried her native land, like a yellowish white, undulating streak.

And as the birds saw it, they hastened their flight.

"I smell the mud of the Nile and the wet frogs!" said mother-stork. "It quite excites me! Yes, now you shall taste them; now you shall see the adjutant bird, the ibis, and the cranes! They all belong to our family, but they are not nearly so handsome as we are. They stick themselves up, especially the ibis; he is now quite pampered by the Egyptians—they make a mummy of him, and stuff him with aromatic herbs. I would rather be stuffed with live frogs, and so would you,



"There stood two beautiful women as much alike as two drops of dew."

and so you shall be. It is better to have something inside you while you live than to be in state when you are dead ! That is my opinion, and that is always right ! ”

“ Now the storks are come ! ” they said in the rich house on the bank of the Nile, where, in the open hall on soft cushions covered with a leopard's skin, the royal master lay outstretched, neither living nor dead, hoping for the lotus flower from the deep marsh in the north. Kinsmen and servants stood around him.

And into the hall flew two beautiful white swans, which had come with the storks ! They threw off their dazzling feather dress, and there stood two beautiful women, as much alike as two drops of dew ! They bent down over the pale, withered old man ; they put back their long hair, and when little Helga stooped over her grandfather, the colour returned to his cheeks, his eyes sparkled, and life came into his stiffened limbs. The old man raised himself healthy and vigorous ; daughter and granddaughter held him in their arms as if they were giving him a morning salutation in their joy after a long, heavy dream.

* * * * *

And there was joy over all the house and in the storks' nest, but there it was chiefly over the good food, and the swarming hosts of frogs ; and whilst the learned men made haste to note down in brief the history of the two princesses and the flower of

health, which was such a great event and a blessing for house and country, the parent storks related it in their fashion to their own family, but not till they had all satisfied their hunger, or else they would have had something else to do than to listen to stories.

"Now you will become somebody!" whispered mother-stork; "that is certain!"

"Well! what should I become?" said father-stork; "and what have I done? A mere nothing!"

"You have done more than all the others! But for you and the young ones the two princesses would never have seen Egypt again, and made the old man well. You will become somebody! You will certainly receive a Doctor's degree, and our young ones will bear it afterwards, and their young ones will have it in turn. You look already like an Egyptian doctor—in my eyes!"

The wise and learned expounded the fundamental idea, as they called it, that ran through the whole history: "Love brings forth life!"—they gave that explanation in different ways—"the warm sunbeam was the Egyptian princess, she descended to the Marsh King, and in their meeting the flower sprang forth——"

"I can't repeat the words quite right," said father-stork, who had heard it from the roof, and was expected to tell them all about it in his nest. "What they said was so involved, it was so clever, that they immediately received honours and gifts.

Even the head cook obtained a high mark of distinction—that was for the soup ! ”

“ And what did you receive ? ” inquired mother-stork ; “ they ought not to forget the most im-

portant, and that is yourself. The learned have only chattered about it all, but your turn will come ! ”

Late that night, while peaceful slumber enwrapped the now prosperous house, there was one who was still awake ; and that was not the father-stork, though he stood on one leg in the nest and slept like a sentinel. No, little Helga was awake. She

leaned out over the balcony and gazed at the clear sky, with the great, bright stars, larger



“ She saw two powerful ostriches running about in narrow circles.”

and purer in their lustre than she had seen them in the north, and yet the same. She thought of the Viking's wife by the moor, of her foster-mother's gentle eyes, and the tears she had shed over her poor toad-child, who now stood in the light and splendour of the stars by the waters of the Nile in the soft air of spring. She thought of the love in that heathen woman's breast, that love which she had shown to a miserable creature who, in human form, was an evil brute, and in the form of an animal, loathsome to look at and to touch. She looked at the shining stars, and called to mind the splendour on the forehead of the dead man, when they flew away over forest and moor; tones resounded in her recollection, words she had heard pronounced when they rode away, and she sat as if paralyzed—words about the great Author of Love, the highest Love, embracing all generations.

Yes, how much had been given, gained, obtained! Little Helga's thoughts were occupied, night and day, with all her good fortune, and she stood in contemplation of it like a child which turns quickly from the giver to all the beautiful presents that have been given; so she rose up in her increasing happiness, which could come and would come. She was indeed borne in mysterious ways to even higher joy and happiness, and in this she lost herself one day so entirely that she thought no more of the Giver. It was the strength of youthful courage that inspired her bold venture. Her eyes shone,

but suddenly she was called back by a great clamour in the courtyard beneath. There she saw two powerful ostriches running hurriedly about in narrow circles. She had never before seen that creature, so great a bird, so clumsy and heavy. Its wings looked as if they were clipped, the bird itself as if it had been injured, and she inquired what had been done to it, and for the first time,



“ Placed the golden circlet about his neck.”

heard the tradition which the Egyptians relate about the ostrich.

The race had at one time been beautiful, its wings large and powerful ; then, one evening, a mighty forest bird said to it : “ Brother, shall we fly to the river in the morning, if God will, and drink ? ” And the ostrich replied : “ I will.” When day broke they flew off, at first high up to-

wards the sun—the eye of God—ever higher and higher, the ostrich far before all the others ; it flew in its pride towards the light ; it relied on its own strength, and not on the Giver ; it did not say, “ If God will ! ” Then the avenging angel drew back the veil from the burning flame, and in that instant the bird’s wings were burnt ; it sank miserably to the earth. Its descendants are no longer able to raise themselves ; they fly in terror, rush about in circles in that narrow space. It is a reminder to us men, in all our thoughts, in all our actions, to say : “ If God will ! ”

And Helga thoughtfully bowed her head, looked at the hurrying ostrich, saw its fear, saw its silly delight at the sight of its own great shadow on the white sunlit wall. And deep seriousness fixed itself into her mind and thoughts. So rich a life, so full of prosperity, was given, was obtained—what would happen ? What was yet to come ? The best thing : “ If God will ! ”

* * * * *

In the early spring, when the storks again started for the north, little Helga took her gold bracelet, scratched her name on it, beckoned to the stork-father, placed the golden circlet about his neck, and asked him to bear it to the Viking’s wife, by which she would understand that her foster-daughter was alive, and that she was happy, and thought of her.

“ That is heavy to carry ! ” thought the father-

stork when it was placed around his neck ; " but one does not throw gold and honour on the high-road. They will find it true up there that the stork brings fortune ! "

" You lay gold, and I lay eggs ! " said the mother-stork ; " but you only lay once, and I lay every year ! But it vexes me that neither of us is appreciated."

" But we are quite aware of it ourselves, mother ! " said father-stork.

" But you can't hang that on you," said mother-stork. " It neither gives us fair wind nor food."

And so they flew.

The little nightingale, that sang in the tamarind-bush, also wished to start for the north immediately. Little Helga had often heard him up there near the moor ; she wished to give him a message, for she understood the speech of birds when she flew in the swan's skin, and she had often since that time used it with the stork and the swallow. The nightingale would understand her, and she asked him to fly to the beech-forest on the peninsula of Jutland, where she had erected the grave of stones and boughs ; there she asked him to bid all the small birds to protect the grave, and always to sing their songs around it. And the nightingale flew—and time flew also.

* * * * *

The eagle stood on the pyramid in the autumn, and saw a magnificent array of richly-laden camels,

with armed men in costly clothing, on snorting Arabian steeds, shining as white as silver, and with red quivering nostrils, their heavy thick manes hanging down about their slender legs. Rich visitors, a royal prince from the land of Arabia, beautiful as a prince ought to be, came to that noble house, where the storks' nest now stood



" Asked him to fly to the beech-forest."

empty, its former occupants now far away in the northern land, but soon to return. And they came exactly on that day which was most filled with joy and mirth. There was a grand wedding, and little Helga was the bride arrayed in silk and jewels ; the bridegroom was the young prince from the land of Arabia ; and the two sat highest

at the table between the mother and grandfather. But she did not look at the bridegroom's brown, manly cheek, where his black beard curled ; she did not look at his dark, fiery eyes, which were fastened upon her ; she looked outwards and upwards towards the twinkling, sparkling stars, which beamed down from heaven.



" She did not look at the bridegroom's brown, manly cheek . . . she looked towards the twinkling, sparkling stars."

Then there was a rustling sound of strong wing-strokes outside in the air—the storks had returned ; and the old couple, however tired they might be with the journey, and however much they needed rest, still flew on to the railing of the verandah immediately they were aware whose festivity it was. They had already heard, at the frontier of the country, that little Helga had allowed them to be painted on the wall because they belonged to her history.

"That is very nicely borne in mind," said father-stork.

"It is very little!" said the stork-mother ;
"she could not have done less."

And when Helga saw them, she got up and went out into the verandah to them to pat them on the back. The old storks curtsied with their necks, and the youngest of their young ones looked on, and felt themselves honoured.

And Helga looked up to the bright stars which shone clearer and clearer ; and between them and her a form seemed to move still purer than the air, and seen through it, that hovered quite near her—it was the dead Christian priest ; so he came on the day of her festivity, came from the Kingdom of Heaven.

"The splendour and glory which are there, surpass everything that earth knows !" he said.

And little Helga prayed gently and from her heart, as she had never prayed before, that she only for one single minute might dare to look within, might only cast one single glance into the Kingdom of Heaven, to the father of all.

And he raised her into the splendour and glory, in one current of sounds and thoughts ; it was not only round about her that it shone and sounded, but within her. No words are able to describe it.

"Now we must return ; you are wanted !" he said

"Only one glance more!" she entreated; "only one short minute!"

"We must go back to the earth; all the guests have gone away."

"Only one glance! the last——"

* * * * *

And little Helga stood outside in the verandah; but all the torches outside were extinguished, all the lights in the wedding chamber were gone, the storks were gone, no guests to be seen, no bridegroom; everything seemed to be blown away in three short minutes.

Then Helga was filled with terror, and she went through the great, empty hall, into the next room. Strange soldiers were sleeping there. She opened a side door that led into her apartment, and when she expected to stand there, she found herself outside in the garden; but it was not like this before—the heaven was red and shining, it was towards daybreak.

Only three minutes in Heaven, and a whole night had passed on the earth!

* * * * *

Then she saw the storks; she cried to them, speaking their language, and father-stork turned his head, listened, and drew near her.

"You are speaking our language!" said he; "what do you want? Why do you come here, you strange woman?"

"It is I! it is Helga! Don't you know me?"

Three minutes ago we were talking together, yonder in the verandah."

"That is a mistake!" said the stork; "you must have dreamt it!"



"Fell on her knees."

"No, no!" she said, and reminded him of the Viking's stronghold and the moor, and of the journey hither!

Then father-stork blinked his eyes: "That is a very old story; I have heard it from my great-great-great-grandmother's time! Yes, certainly, there was such a princess in Egypt from the land

of Denmark, but she disappeared on the night of her wedding many hundreds of years ago, and never came back again. That you may read for yourself on the monument in the garden ; there are sculptured both swans and storks, and at the top you yourself stand in white marble."

It was indeed so. Little Helga saw it, understood it, and fell on her knees.

The sun broke forth, and as in former times at the touch of its beams the toad form disappeared and the beautiful shape was seen, so she raised herself now at the baptism of light in a form of brighter beauty, purer than the air, a ray of light—to the Father of all.

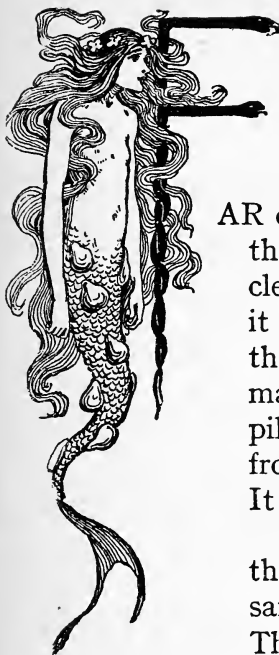
Her body sank in dust ; there lay a faded lotus-flower where she had stood.

* * * * *

"Then that was a new ending to the story!" said the father-stork. "I had not at all expected it! but I rather like it!"

"I wonder what my young ones will say about it!" said the mother-stork.

"Yes, that is certainly the principal thing!" answered the father.



The Little Mermaid

AR out at sea, the water is as blue as the prettiest cornflowers, and as clear as the purest crystal. But it is very deep—so deep, indeed, that no rope can fathom it ; and many church steeples need be piled one upon the other to reach from the bottom to the surface. It is there that the sea-folk dwell.

Nor must it be imagined that there is nothing but a bare, white, sandy ground below. No, indeed!

The soil produces the most curious trees and flowers, whose leaves and stems are so flexible that the slightest motion of the waters seems to fluster them as if they were living creatures. Fishes, great and small, glide through the branches as birds fly through the trees here upon earth. In the deepest spot of all stands the sea-king's palace ; its walls are of coral, and its tall pointed windows of the clearest amber, while

the roof is made of mussel shells, that open and shut according to the tide. And beautiful they look, for in each shell lies a pearl, any one of which would be worthy to be placed in a queen's crown.

The sea-king had been a widower for many years, so his aged mother kept house for him. She was a very wise woman, but extremely proud of her noble birth, which entitled her to wear twelve oyster shells on her tail, while other well-born persons might only wear six. In all other respects she was a very praiseworthy sort of body ; and especially as regards the care she took of the little princesses, her granddaughters. They were six pretty children ; but the youngest was the prettiest of all. Her skin was as clear and delicate as a rose leaf, and her eyes as blue as the deepest sea ; but she had no feet any more than the others, and her body ended in a fish's tail.

They were free to play about all day long in the vast rooms of the palace below water, where live flowers grew upon the walls. The large amber windows were opened, when the fishes would swim inwards to them just as the swallows fly into our houses when we open the windows ; only the fishes swam right up to the princesses, ate out of their hands, and allowed themselves to be stroked.

In front of the palace was a large garden with bright red and dark blue trees, whose fruit glittered like gold, and whose blossoms were like fiery sparks, as both stalks and leaves kept rustling continually.

The ground was strewn with the most delicate sand, but blue as the flames of sulphur. The whole atmosphere was of a peculiar blue tint that would have led you to believe you were hovering high up in the air, with clouds above and below you, rather than standing at the



“Ate out of their hands, and allowed themselves to be stroked.”

bottom of the sea. When the winds were calm, the sun was visible ; and to those below it looked like a scarlet flower shedding light from its calyx.

Each of the little princesses had a plot of ground in the garden, where she might dig and plant as she pleased. One sowed her flowers so as to come up in the shape of a whale ; another preferred the figure of a little mermaid ; but the youngest planted hers in a circle to imitate the sun, and chose flowers as red as the sun appeared to her. She was a singular child, both silent and thoughtful ; and while her sisters were delighted with all the strange things that they obtained through the

wrecks of various ships, she had never claimed anything—with the exception of the red flowers that resembled the sun above—but a pretty statue, representing a handsome youth, hewn out of pure white marble that had sunk to the bottom of the sea, when a ship ran aground. She planted a bright red weeping-willow beside the statue; and when the tree grew up, its fresh boughs hung over it nearly down to the blue sands, where the shadow looked quite violet, and kept dancing about like the branches. It seemed as if the top of the tree were at play with its roots, and each trying to snatch a kiss.

There was nothing she delighted in so much as to hear about the upper world. She was always asking her grandmother to tell her all she knew about ships, towns, people, and animals. What struck her as most beautiful was that the flowers of the earth should shed perfumes, which they do not below the sea; that the forests were green, and that the fishes amongst the trees should sing so loud and so exquisitely that it must be a treat to hear them. It was the little birds that her grandmother called fishes, or else her young listeners would not have understood her, for they had never seen birds.

“When you have accomplished your fifteenth year,” said the grandmother, “you shall have leave to rise up out of the sea, and sit on the rocks in the moonshine, and look at the large ships

sailing past. And then you will see both forests and towns."

In the following year one of the sisters would reach the age of fifteen, but as all the rest were each a year younger than the other, the youngest would have to wait five years before it would be her turn to come up from the bottom of the ocean, and see what our world is like. However, the eldest promised to tell the others what she saw, and what struck her as most beautiful on the first day; for their grandmother did not tell them enough, and there were so many things they wanted to know.

But none of them longed for her turn to come so intensely as the youngest, who had to wait the longest, and was so reserved and thoughtful. Many a night did she stand at the open window, and gaze upwards through the dark blue water, and watch the fishes as they lashed the sea with their fins and tails. She could see the moon and stars, that appeared, indeed, rather pale, though much larger, seen through the water, than they do to us. If something resembling a black cloud glided between the stars and herself, she knew that it was either a whale swimming overhead, or a ship full of human beings, none of whom probably dreamed that a lovely little mermaid was standing below, and stretching forth her white hands towards the keel of their vessel.

The eldest princess was now fifteen, and was allowed to rise up to the surface of the sea.



"A statue, representing a handsome youth, hewn out of pure white marble."

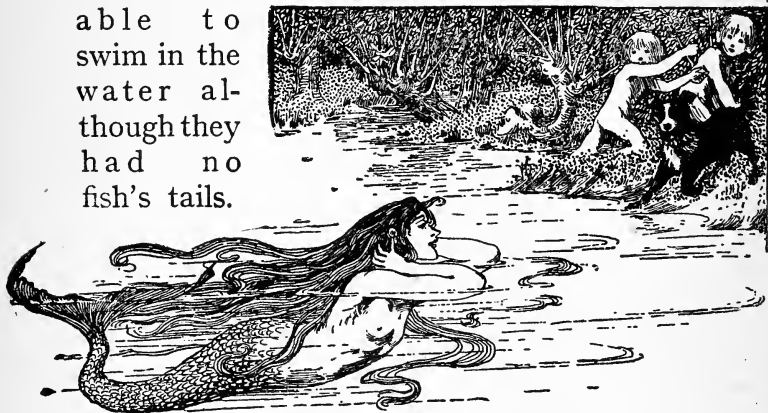
On her return she had a great deal to relate ; but the most delightful thing of all, she said, was to lie upon a sand-bank in the calm sea, and to gaze upon the large city near the coast, where lights wereshining like hundreds of stars ; to listen to the sounds of music, to the din of carriages, and the busy hum of the crowd ; and to see the church steeples, and hear the bells ringing. And she longed after all these things, just because she could not approach them.

Oh, how attentively her youngest sister listened ! And later in the evening, when she stood at the open window, and gazed up through the dark blue water, how she thought about the large city, with its din and bustle, and even fancied she could hear the church bells ringing from below.

In the following year, the second sister obtained leave to rise up to the surface of the water, and swim about at her pleasure. She went up just at sunset, which appeared to her the finest sight of all. She said that the whole sky appeared like gold, and as to the clouds, their beauty was beyond all description. Red and violet clouds sailed rapidly above her head, while a flock of wild swans, resembling a long white scarf, flew still faster than they across the sea towards the setting sun. She, too, swam towards it, but the sun sank down, and the rosy hues vanished from the surface of the water and from the skies.

The year after, the third sister went up. She was the boldest of them all, so she swam up a river that fell into the sea. She saw beautiful green hills covered with vines ; castles and citadels peeped out from stately woods ; she heard the birds singing, and the sun felt so warm that she was frequently obliged to dive down under the water to cool her burning face. In a small creek she met with a whole troop of little human children. They were naked, and dabbling about in the water. She wanted to play with them, but they flew

away in great alarm, and there came a little black animal (she meant a dog, only she had never seen one before), who barked at her so tremendously that she was frightened, and sought to reach the open sea. But she should never forget the beautiful forests, the green hills, or the pretty children, who were able to swim in the water although they had no fish's tails.



"They flew away in great alarm."

The fourth sister was less daring. She remained in the midst of the sea, and maintained that it was most beautiful at that point, because from thence one could see for miles around, and the sky looked like a glass bell above one's head. She had seen ships, but only at a distance—they looked like sea-mews; and the waggish dolphins had thrown somersaults, and the large whales had squirted water through their nostrils, so that one

might fancy there were hundreds of fountains all round.

It was now the fifth sister's turn. Her birthday was in the winter, therefore she saw what the others had not seen the first time they went up. The sea looked quite green, and huge icebergs were floating about ; each looked like a pearl, she said, only larger than the churches built by human beings. They were of the oddest shapes, and glittered like diamonds. She had placed herself upon the largest of them, letting the wind play with her long hair, and all the vessels scudded past in great alarm, as though fearful of approaching the spot where she was sitting, but towards evening, the sky became overcast, it thundered and lightened, while the dark sea lifted up the huge icebergs on high, so that they were illuminated by the red flashes of the lightning. All the vessels reefed in their sails, and their passengers were panic struck, while she sat quietly on her floating block of ice, and watched the blue lightning as it zig-zagged along the silent sea.

The first time that each of the sisters had successively risen to the surface of the water, they had been enchanted by the novelty and beauty of all they saw ; but being now grown up, and at liberty to go above as often as they pleased, they had grown indifferent to such excursions. They longed to come back into the water, and at the end of a month they had all declared that it was



"All the vessels scudded past in great alarm."

far more beautiful down below, and that it was pleasanter to stay at home.



"As often as the water lifted her up she peeped in through the transparent panes."

It frequently happened in the evening that the five sisters would entwine their arms, and rise up to the surface of the water all in a row. They had beautiful voices, far finer than any human being's, and when a storm was coming on, and they anticipated that a ship might sink, they swam before the vessel, and sang most sweetly of the delights to be found beneath the water, begging the seafarers not to be afraid of coming down below. But the sailors could not understand what they said, and mistook their words for the howling of the tempest, and they never saw all the fine things below, for if the ship sank the men were drowned, and their bodies alone reached the sea-king's palace.

When the sisters rose up arm-in-arm through the water, the youngest would stand alone, looking after them, and felt ready to cry ; only mermaids have no tears, and therefore suffer all the more.

"How I wish I were fifteen!" said she. "I am sure I shall love the world above, and the beings that inhabit it."

At last she reached the age of fifteen.

"Well, now you are grown up!" said her grandmother, the widow of the late king. "So let me dress you like your sisters." And she placed in her hair a wreath of white lilies, every leaf of which was half a pearl ; and the old dame ordered eight large oyster shells to be fastened to the princess's tail, to denote her high rank.

"But they hurt me so," said the little mermaid.

"Pride must suffer pain," said the old lady.

Oh ! how gladly would she have shaken off all this pomp and laid aside her heavy wreath—the red flowers in her garden adorned her far better—but she could not help herself. "Farewell !" cried she, rising as lightly as a bubble to the surface of the water.

The sun had just sunk as she raised her head above the waves, but the clouds were still pink, and fringed with gold ; and through the fast vanishing rosy tints of the air beamed the evening in all its beauty. The atmosphere was mild and cool, and the sea quite calm. A large ship with three masts was lying on its surface ; only a single sail was hoisted, for not a breeze was stirring, and the sailors were sitting all about in the rigging. There were musical instruments playing, and voices singing ; and when the evening grew darker, hundreds of gay-coloured lanterns were lighted, which looked like the flags of all nations streaming through the air. The little mermaid swam close to the cabin window, and as often as the water lifted her up, she peeped in through the transparent panes, and saw a number of well-dressed persons. But the handsomest of all was the prince, with large, dark eyes ; he could not be above sixteen, and it was *his* birthday that was being celebrated with such magnificence. The sailors danced upon deck, and when the young prince came up above a hundred rockets were let off, that lit the air till

it was as bright as day, and so frightened the little mermaid that she dived under the water. But she soon popped out her head once more, when all the stars in heaven seemed to be falling down upon her. She had never seen such fireworks before ; large suns were throwing out sparks, beautiful fiery fishes were darting through the blue air, and all these wonders were reflected in the calm sea below. The ship itself was thrown into such bright relief that every little cord was distinctly visible, and, of course, each person still more so. And how handsome the young prince looked, as he pressed the hands of those present and smiled, while the music resounded through that lovely night !

It was late. Still the little mermaid could not take her eyes off the ship or the handsome prince. The variegated lanterns were now extinguished, the rockets ceased to be let off, and no more cannons were fired ; but there was a rumbling and a grumbling in the heart of the sea. Still she sat rocking up and down in the water, so as to peep into the cabin. But now the ship began to move faster, the sails were unfurled one after another, the waves ran higher, heavy clouds flitted across the sky, and flashes of lightning were seen in the distance. A tremendous storm seemed coming on, so the sailors reefed in the sails once more. The large ship kept pitching to and fro in its rapid course across the raging sea ; the billows heaved, like so many gigantic

black mountains, threatening to roll over the topmast, but the ship dived down like a swan between the high waves, and then rose again on the towering pinnacle of the waters. The little mermaid fancied this was a right pleasant mode of sailing but the crew thought differently. The ship kept,



"She held his head above the water, and then let the waves carry them whither they pleased."

cracking and cracking, the thick planks gave way beneath the repeated lashings of the waves, a leak was sprung, the mast was broken right in twain like a reed, and the vessel drooped on one side, while the water kept filling the hold. The little mermaid now perceived that the crew were in danger, and she herself was obliged to take care not to be hurt by the beams and planks belonging to the ship that were dispersed upon the waters. For one moment

it was so pitch dark that she could see nothing, but when a flash of lightning illumined the sky, and enabled her to discern distinctly all on board, she looked especially for the young prince, whom she perceived sinking into the water just as the ship burst asunder. She was then quite pleased at the thought of his coming down to her, till she reflected that human beings cannot live in water, and that he would be dead by the time he reached her father's castle. But die he must not, therefore she swam towards him through the planks and beams that were driven about on the billows, forgetting that they might crush her to atoms. She dived deep under the water, and then, rising again between the waves, she managed at length to reach the young prince, who was scarcely able to buffet any longer with the stormy sea. His arms and legs began to feel powerless, his beautiful eyes were closed, and he would have died had not the little mermaid come to his assistance. She held his head above the water, and then let the waves carry them whither they pleased.

Towards morning the storm had abated, but not a wreck of the vessel was to be seen. The sun rose red and beaming from the water, and seemed to infuse life into the prince's cheeks, but his eyes remained closed. The mermaid kissed his high, polished forehead, and stroked back his wet hair; she fancied he was like the marble statue in her

garden, and she kissed him again, and wished that he might live.

They now came in sight of land, and she saw high blue mountains, on the tops of which the snow looked as dazzlingly white as though a flock of swans were lying there. Below, near the coast, were beautiful green forests, and in front stood a church or a convent—she did not rightly know which—but, at all events, it was a building. Citrons and China oranges grew in the garden, and tall palm-trees stood in front of the door. The sea formed a small bay at this spot, and the water, though very deep, was quite calm ; so she swam with the handsome prince towards the cliff, where the delicate white sands had formed a heap, and here she laid him down, taking great care that his head should be placed higher than his body, and in the warm sunshine.

The bells now pealed from the large white building, and a number of girls came into the garden. The little mermaid then swam farther away and hid herself behind some high stones that rose out of the water, and covering her head and bosom with foam, so that no one could see her little countenance, she watched whether any one came to the poor prince's assistance.

It was not long before a young maiden approached the spot where he was lying. She appeared frightened at first, but it was only for a moment ; and then she fetched a number of persons ; and

the mermaid saw that the prince came to life again, and that he smiled on all those around him. But he did not send her a smile, neither did he know she had saved him, so she felt quite afflicted ; and when he was led into the large building she dived back into the water with a heavy heart and returned to her father's castle.

Silent and thoughtful as she had always been, she now grew still more so. Her sisters inquired what she had seen the first time she went above, but she did not tell them.

Many an evening, and many a morning, did she rise up to the spot where she had left the prince. She saw the fruit in the garden grow ripe, and then she saw it gathered ; she saw the snow melt away from the summits of the high mountains, but she did not see the prince ; and each time she returned home more sorrowful than ever. Her only consolation was to sit in her little garden and to fling her arm round the beauteous marble statue that was like the prince ; but she ceased to tend her flowers, and they grew like a wilderness all over the paths, entwining their long stems and leaves with the branches of the trees, so that it was quite dark beneath their shade.

At length she could resist no longer, and opened her heart to one of her sisters, from whom all the others immediately learned her secret, though they told it to no one else, except to a couple of other mermaids, who divulged it to nobody, except to



"It was not long before a young maiden approached the spot where he was lying."

their most intimate friends. One of these happened to know who the prince was. She, too, had seen the gala on ship-board, and informed them whence he came, and where his kingdom lay.

"Come, little sister," said the other princesses ; and, entwining their arms, they rose up in a long row out of the sea at the spot where they knew the prince's palace stood.

This was built of bright yellow, shining stone, with a broad flight of marble steps, the last of which reached down into the sea. Magnificent golden cupolas rose above the roof, and marble statues, closely imitating life, were placed between the pillars that surrounded the edifice. One could see, through the transparent panes of the large windows, right into the magnificent rooms, fitted with costly silk curtains and splendid hangings, and ornamented with large pictures on all the walls ; so that it was a pleasure to look at them. In the middle of the principal room, a large fountain threw up its sparkling jets as high as the glass cupola in the ceiling, through which the sun shone down upon the water, and on the beautiful plants growing in the wide basin that contained it.

Now that she knew where he lived, she spent many an evening, and many a night, on the neighbouring water. She swam much nearer the shores than any of the others had ventured to do ; nay, she even went up the narrow canal, under the handsome marble balcony that threw its long

shadow over the water. Here she would sit and gaze at the young prince, who thought himself quite alone in the bright moonshine.

Many an evening did she see him sailing in his pretty boat, adorned with flags, and enjoying music : then she would listen from amongst the green reeds ; and if the wind happened to seize hold of her long silvery white veil, those who saw it took it to be a swan spreading out his wings.



“ ‘ You must not think about that,’ said the old dame.”

Many a night, too, when fishermen were spreading their nets by torchlight, she heard them speaking highly of the young prince ; and she rejoiced that she had saved his life, when he was tossed about, half dead, on the waves. And she remembered how his head had rested on her bosom and how heartily she had kissed him—but of all this he knew nothing, and he could not even dream about her.

She soon grew to be more and more fond of human beings, and to long more and more fervently to be able to walk about amongst them, for their world appeared to her far larger and more beautiful than her own. They could fly across the sea upon ships and scale mountains that towered above the clouds ; and the lands they possessed—their fields and their forests—stretched away far beyond the reach of her sight.

There was such a deal that she wanted to learn, but her sisters were not able to answer all her questions ; therefore she applied to her old grandmother, who was well acquainted with the upper world, which she called, very correctly, the lands above the sea.

“ If human beings do not get drowned,” asked the little mermaid, “ can they live for ever ? Do not they die, as we do here in the sea ? ”

“ Yes,” said the ancient dame, “ they must die as well as we ; and the term of their life is even shorter than ours. We can live to be three hundred years old ; but when we cease to be here, we shall only be changed into foam, and are not even buried below among those we love. Our souls are not immortal. We shall never enter upon a new life. We are like the green reed, that can never flourish again when it has once been cut through. Human beings, on the contrary, have a soul that lives eternally—yea, even after the body has been committed to the earth—and that rises up through

the clear pure air to the bright stars above ! Like as we rise out of the water to look at the haunts of men, so do they rise to unknown and favoured regions, that we shall never be privileged to see."

"And why have not we an immortal soul ?" asked the little mermaid sorrowfully. "I would willingly give all the hundreds of years I may have to live, to be a human being but for one day, and to have the hope of sharing in the joys of the heavenly world."

"You must not think about that," said the old dame. "We feel we are much happier and better than the human race above."

"So I shall die, and be driven about like foam on the sea, and cease to hear the music of the waves and to see the beautiful flowers, and the red sun ? Is there nothing I can do to obtain an immortal soul ?"

"No," said the old sea-queen ; "unless a human being loved you so dearly that you were more to him than either father or mother ; if all his thoughts and his love were centred in you, and he allowed the priest to lay his right hand in yours, promising to be faithful to you here and hereafter : then would his soul glide into your body, and you would obtain a share in the happiness awaiting human beings. He would give you a soul without forfeiting his own. But this will never happen ! Your fish's tail, which is a beauty amongst us sea-folk, is thought a deformity on earth, because

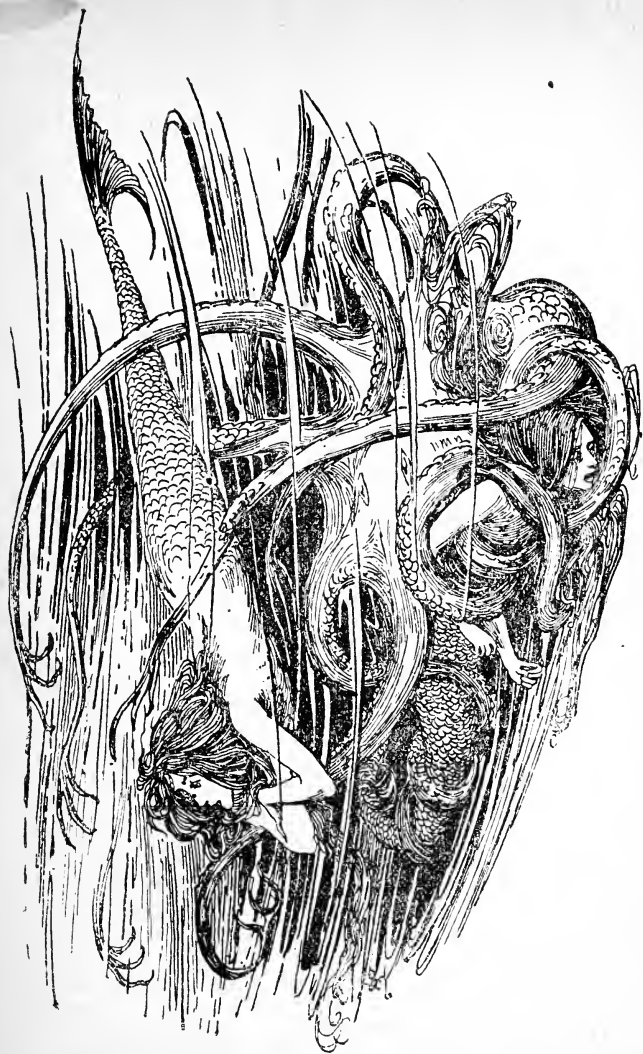
they know no better. It is necessary there to have two stout props, that they call legs, in order to be beautiful ! ”

The little mermaid sighed as she cast a glance at her fish's tail.

“ Let us be merry,” said the old dame ; “ let us jump and hop about during the three hundred years that we have to live—which is really quite enough, in all conscience. We shall then be all the more disposed to rest at a later period. To-night we shall have a court ball.”

On these occasions there was a display of magnificence such as we never see upon earth. The walls and the ceiling of the large ball-room were of thick, though transparent glass. Hundreds of colossal mussel-shells—some of a deep red, others as green as grass—were hung in rows on each side, and contained blue flames that illuminated the whole room, and shone through the walls so that the sea was lighted all around. Countless fishes, great and small, were to be seen swimming past the glass walls, some of them flaunting in scarlet scales, while others sparkled like liquid gold or silver.

Through the ball-room flowed a wide stream, on whose surface the mermen and mermaids danced to their own sweet singing. Human beings have no such voices. The little mermaid sang the sweetest of them all, and the whole court applauded with their hands and tails ; and for a moment she felt delighted, for she knew that she



"Crossing her hands over her bosom she darted along as a fish shoots through the water between the ugly polypi."

had the loveliest voice ever heard upon earth or upon the sea. But her thoughts soon turned once more to the upper world, for she could not long forget either the handsome prince or her grief at not having an immortal soul like his. She, therefore, stole out of her father's palace, where all within was song and festivity and sat down sadly in her own little garden. Here she heard a bugle sounding through the water.

"Now," thought she, "he is surely sailing about up above—he who incessantly fills all my thoughts, and to whose hands I would fain entrust the happiness of my existence. I will venture everything to win him and to obtain an immortal soul. While my sisters are dancing yonder in my father's castle I will go to the sea-witch, who has always frightened me hitherto, but now, perhaps, she can advise and help me."

The little mermaid then left her garden, and repaired to the rushing whirlpool, behind which the sorceress lived. She had never gone that way before. Neither flowers nor sea-grass grew there; and nothing but bare, grey, sandy ground led to the whirlpool, where the waters kept eddying like waving mill-wheels, dragging everything they clutched hold of into the fathomless depth below. Between these whirlpools, that might have crushed her in their rude grasp, was the mermaid forced to pass to reach the dominions of the sea-witch; and even here, during a good part of the way, there was

no other road than across a sheet of warm, bubbling mire, which the witch called her turf-common. At the back of this lay her house, in the midst of a most singular forest. Its trees and bushes were polypi—half animal, half plant—they looked like hundred-headed serpents growing out of the ground ; the branches were long, slimy arms, with fingers like flexible worms, and they could move every joint from the root to the tip. They laid fast hold of whatever they could snatch from the sea, and never yielded it up again. The little mermaid was so frightened at the sight of them that her heart beat with fear, and she was fain to turn back ; but then she thought of the prince, and of the soul that human beings possessed, and she took courage. She knotted up her long, flowing hair, that the polypi might not seize hold of her locks ; and, crossing her hands over her bosom, she darted along as a fish shoots through the water, between the ugly polypi, that stretched forth their flexible arms and fingers behind her. She perceived how each of them retained what it had siezed, with hundreds of little arms, as strong as iron clasps. Human beings, who had died at sea and had sunk below, looked like white skeletons in the arms of the polypi. They clutched rudders, too, and chests, and skeletons of animals belonging to the earth, and even a little mermaid whom they had caught and stifled—and this appeared to her, perhaps, the most shocking of all.

She now approached a vast swamp in the forest, where large, fat water-snakes were wallowing in the mire and displaying their ugly whitish-yellow



"Within sat the sea-witch, feeding
a toad from her mouth."

bodies. In the midst of this loathsome spot stood a house, built of the bones of shipwrecked human beings, and within sat the sea-witch, feeding a toad from her mouth, just as people amongst us give a little canary-bird a lump of sugar to eat. She called the nasty fat

water-snakes her little chicks, and let them creep all over her bosom.

"I know what you want!" said the sea-witch. "It is very stupid of you, but you shall have your way, as it will plunge you into misfortune, my fair princess. You want to be rid of your fish's tail, and to have a couple of props like those human beings have to walk about upon, in order that the young prince may fall in love with you, and that you may obtain his hand and an immortal soul into the bargain!" And then the old witch laughed so loud and so repulsively that the toad and the snakes fell to the ground, where they lay wriggling about. "You come just at the nick of

time," added the witch, "for to-morrow, by sunrise, I should no longer be able to help you till another year had flown past. I will prepare you a potion; and you must swim ashore with it to-morrow, before sunrise, and then sit down and drink it. Your tail will then disappear, and shrivel up into what human beings call neat legs. But mind, it will hurt you as much as if a sharp sword were thrust through you. Everybody that sees you will say you are the most beautiful mortal ever seen. You will retain the floating elegance of your gait; no dancer will move so lightly as you, but every step you take will be like treading upon such sharp knives that you would think your blood must flow. If you choose to put up with sufferings like these, I have the power to help you."

"I do," said the little mermaid, in a trembling voice, as she thought of the prince and of an immortal soul.

"But bethink you well," said the witch; "if once you obtain a human form, you can never be a mermaid again! You will never be able to dive down into the water to your sisters or return to your father's palace; and if you should fail in winning the prince's love to the degree of his forgetting both father and mother for your sake, and loving you with his whole soul, and bidding the priest join your hands in marriage, then you will never obtain an immortal soul! And the very day after he will have married another, your heart

will break, and you will dissolve into the foam on the billows."

"I am resolved," said the little mermaid, who had turned as pale as death.

"But you must pay me my dues," said the witch, "and it is no small matter I require. You have the loveliest voice of all the inhabitants of the deep, and you reckon upon its tones to charm him into loving you. Now, you must give me this beautiful voice. I choose to have the best of all you possess in exchange for my valuable potion. For I must mix my own blood with it, that it may prove as sharp as a two-edged sword."

"But if you take away my voice," said the little mermaid, "what have I left?"

"Your lovely form," said the witch, "your buoyant carriage, and your expressive eyes. With these you surely can befool a man's heart. Well? Has your courage melted away? Come, put out your little tongue, and let me cut it off for my fee, and you shall have the valuable potion."

"So be it," said the little mermaid; and the witch put her cauldron on the fire to prepare the potion. "Cleanliness is a virtue!" quoth she, scouring the cauldron with the snakes that she had tied into a knot; after which she pricked her own breast, and let her black blood trickle down into the vessel. The steam rose up in such fanciful shapes that no one could have looked at them without a shudder. The witch kept flinging fresh

materials into the cauldron every moment, and when it began to simmer it was like the wailings of a crocodile. At length the potion was ready, and it looked like the purest spring water.

"Here it is," said the witch, cutting off the little mermaid's tongue; so now she was dumb, and could neither sing nor speak.

"If the polypi should seize hold of you on your return through my forest," said the witch, "you need only sprinkle a single drop of this potion over them, and their arms and fingers will be shivered to a thousand pieces." But the little mermaid had no need of this talisman; the polypi drew back in alarm from her on perceiving the dazzling potion that shined in her hand like a twinkling star. So she crossed rapidly through the forest, the swamp, and the raging whirlpool.

She saw her father's palace—the torches were now extinguished in the large ball-room—and she knew the whole family were asleep within, but she did not dare venture to go and seek them, now that she was dumb and was about to leave them for ever. Her heart seemed ready to burst with anguish. She stole into the garden and plucked a



"When the sun rose over the sea she awoke, and felt a sharp pang."

flower from each of her sisters' flower-beds, kissed her hand a thousand times to the palace, and then rose up through the blue waters.

The sun had not yet risen when she saw the prince's castle and reached the magnificent marble steps. The moon shone brightly. The little mermaid drank the sharp and burning potion, and it seemed as if a two-edged sword was run through her delicate frame. She fainted away, and remained apparently lifeless. When the sun rose over the sea she awoke, and felt a sharp pang ; but just before her stood the handsome young prince. He gazed at her so intently with his coal-black eyes that she cast hers to the ground, and now perceived that her fish's tail had disappeared, and that she had a pair of the neatest little white legs that a maiden could desire. Only, having no clothes on, she was obliged to enwrap herself in her long, thick hair. The prince inquired who she was, and how she had come thither ; but she could only look at him with her mild but sorrowful deep blue eyes, for speak she could not. He then took her by the hand, and led her into the palace. Every step she took was, as the witch had warned her it would be, like treading on the points of needles and sharp knives ; but she bore it willingly, and, hand in hand with the prince, she glided in as lightly as a soap-bubble, so that he, as well as everybody else, marvelled at her lovely lightsome gait.

She was now dressed in costly robes of silk and

muslin, and was the most beautiful of all the inmates of the palace ; but she was dumb, and could neither sing nor speak. Handsome female slaves attired in silk and gold came and sang before the prince and his royal parents ; and one of them happening to sing more beautifully than all the others, the prince clapped his hands and smiled. This afflicted the little mermaid. She knew that she herself had sung much more exquisitely, and thought, " Oh, did he but know that to be near him I sacrificed my voice to all eternity ! "

The female slaves now performed a variety of elegant, aërial-looking dances to the sound of the most delightful music. The little mermaid then raised her beautiful white arms, stood on the tips of her toes, and floated across the floor in such a way as no one had ever danced before. Every motion revealed some fresh beauty, and her eyes appealed still more directly to the heart than the singing of the slaves had done.

Everybody was enchanted, but most of all the prince, who called her his little foundling ; and she danced on and on, though every time her foot touched the floor she felt as if she were treading on sharp knives. The prince declared that he would never part with her, and she obtained leave to sleep on a velvet cushion before his door.

He had her dressed in male attire, that she might accompany him on horseback. They then rode together through the perfumed forests, where

the green boughs touched their shoulders, and the little birds sang amongst the cool leaves. She climbed up mountains by the prince's side ; and though her tender feet bled so that others perceived it, she only laughed at her sufferings, and followed him till they could see the clouds rolling beneath them like a flock of birds bound for some distant land.

At night, when others slept throughout the prince's palace, she would go and sit on the broad marble step, for it cooled her burning feet to bathe them in the sea water ; and then she thought of those below the deep.

One night her sisters rose up arm in arm, and sang so mournfully as they glided over the waters. She then made them a sign, when they recognized her, and told her how deeply she had afflicted them



"She would go and sit on the broad marble steps, for it cooled her burning feet to bathe them in the sea water."

all. After that they visited her every night ; and once she perceived at a great distance her aged grandmother, who had not come up above the surface of the sea for many years, and the sea-king, with his crown on his head. They stretched out their arms to her, but they did not venture so near the shore as her sisters.

‘Each day she grew to love the prince more fondly ; and he loved her just as one loves a dear, good child. But as to choosing her for his queen, such an idea never entered his head ; yet unless she became his wife, she would not obtain an immortal soul, and would melt to foam on the morrow of his wedding another.

“ Don’t you love me the best of all ? ” would the little mermaid’s eyes seem to ask, when he embraced her and kissed her fair forehead.

“ Yes, I love you best,” said the prince, “ for you have the best heart of any. You are the most devoted to me, and you resemble a young maiden whom I once saw, but whom I shall never meet again. I was on board a ship that sank ; the billows cast me near a holy temple, where several young maids were performing divine service ; the youngest of them found me on the shore and saved my life. I saw her only twice. She would be the only one that I could love in this world ; but your features are like hers, and you have almost driven her image out of my soul. She belongs to the holy temple ; and, therefore, my good star has sent you to me—and we will never part.”

“ Alas ! he knows not that it was I who saved his life ! ” thought the little mermaid. “ I bore him across the sea to the wood where stands the holy temple, and I sat beneath the foam to watch whether any human beings came to help him. I saw the pretty girl whom he loves better than he

does me." And the mermaid heaved a deep sigh, for tears she had none to shed. "He says the maiden belongs to the holy temple, and she will, therefore, never return to the world. They will not meet again while I am by his side and see him every day. I will take care of him, and love him, and sacrifice my life to him."



"He kissed her rosy mouth and played with her long hair."

But now came a talk of the prince being about to marry, and to obtain for his wife the beautiful daughter of a neighbouring king; and that was why he was fitting out such a magnificent vessel. The prince was travelling ostensibly on a mere visit to his neighbour's estates, but in reality to see the king's daughter. He was to be accompanied by a numerous retinue. The little mer-

maid shook her head and smiled. She knew the prince's thoughts better than the others did. "I must travel," he had said to her. "I must see this

beautiful princess, because my parents require it of me ; but they will not force me to bring her home as my bride. I cannot love her. She will not resemble the beautiful maid in the temple whom you are like ; and if I were compelled to choose a bride, it should sooner be you, my dumb foundling, with those expressive eyes of yours.' And he kissed her rosy mouth, and played with her long hair, and rested his head against her heart, which beat high with hopes of human felicity and of an immortal soul.

" You are not afraid of the sea, my dumb child, are you ? " said he, as they stood on the magnificent vessel that was to carry them to the neighbouring king's dominions. And he talked to her about tempests and calm, of the singular fishes to be found in the deep, and of the wonderful things the divers saw below ; and she smiled, for she knew better than any one else what was in the sea below.

During the moonlit night, when all were asleep on board, not even excepting the helmsman at his rudder, she sat on deck, and gazed through the clear waters, and fancied she saw her father's palace. High above it stood her aged grandmother, with her silver crown on her head, looking up intently at the keel of the ship. Then her sisters rose up to the surface, and gazed at her mournfully, and wrung their white hands. She made a sign to them, smiled, and would fain have told them that she was happy and well off ; but

the cabin-boy approached, and the sisters dived beneath the waves, leaving him to believe that the white forms he thought he descried were only the foam upon the waters.

Next morning the ship came into port, at the neighbouring king's splendid capital. The bells were all set a-ringing, trumpets sounded flourishes from high turrets, and soldiers, with flying colours and shining bayonets, stood ready to welcome the stranger. Every day brought some fresh entertainment: balls and feasts succeeded each other. But the princess was not yet there; for she had been brought up, people said, in a far distant, holy temple, where she had acquired all manner of royal virtues. At last she came.

The little mermaid was curious to judge of her beauty, and she was obliged to acknowledge to herself that she had never seen a lovelier face. Her skin was delicate and transparent, and beneath her long, dark lashes sparkled a pair of sincere, dark blue eyes.

"It is you!" cried the prince—"you who saved me, when I lay like a lifeless corpse upon the shore!" And he folded his blushing bride in his arms. "Oh, I am too happy!" said he to the little mermaid: "my fondest dream has come to pass. You will rejoice at my happiness, for you wish me better than any of them." And the little mermaid kissed his hand, and felt already as if her heart was about to break. His wedding-

morning would bring her death, and she would be then changed to foam upon the sea.

All the church bells were ringing, and the heralds rode through the streets, and proclaimed the approaching nuptials. Perfumed oil was burning in costly silver lamps on all the altars. The priests were swinging their censers; while the bride and bridegroom joined their hands, and received the bishop's blessing. The little mermaid, dressed in silk and gold, held up the bride's train; but her ears did not hear the solemn music, neither did her eyes behold the ceremony: she thought of the approaching gloom of death, and of all she had lost in this world.

That same evening the bride and bridegroom went on board. The cannons were roaring, the banners were streaming, and a costly tent of gold and purple, lined with beautiful cushions, had been pre-



"She was fain to laugh and dance, though the thoughts of death were in her heart."

pared on deck for the reception of the bridal pair.

The vessel then set sail, with a favourable wind and glided smoothly along the calm sea.

When it grew dark a number of variegated lamps were lighted, and the crew danced merrily on deck. The little mermaid could not help remembering her first visit to the earth, when she witnessed similar festivities and magnificence ; and she twirled round in the dance, half poised in the air, like a swallow when pursued ; and all present cheered her in ecstasies, for never had she danced so enchantingly before. Her tender feet felt the sharp pangs of knives ; but she heeded it not, for a sharper pang had shot through her heart. She knew that this was the last evening she should ever be able to see him for whom she had left both her relations and her home, sacrificed her beautiful voice, and daily suffered most excruciating pains, without his having even dreamed that such was the case. It was the last night on which she might breathe the same air as he, and gaze on the deep sea and the starry sky. An eternal night, unenlivened by either thoughts or dreams, now awaited her ; for she had no soul, and could never now obtain one. Yet all was joy and gaiety on board till long past midnight ; and she was fain to laugh and dance, though the thoughts of death were in her heart. The prince kissed his beautiful bride and she played with his black locks ; and



"She then saw her sisters rising out of the flood. They were as pale as herself, and their long and beautiful locks were no longer streaming to the winds, for they had been cut off."

then they went, arm in arm, to rest beneath the splendid tent.

All was now quiet on board ; the steersman only was sitting at the helm, as the little mermaid leaned her white arms on the edge of the vessel, and looked towards the east for the first blush of morning. The very first sunbeam, she knew, must kill her. She then saw her sisters rising out of the flood. They were as pale as herself, and their long and beautiful locks were no longer streaming to the winds, for they had been cut off.

"We gave them to the witch," said they, "to obtain help, that you might not die to-night. She gave us a knife in exchange—and a sharp one it is as you may see. Now, before sunrise, you must plunge it into the prince's heart ; and when his warm blood shall besprinkle your feet, they will again close up into a fish's tail, and you will be a mermaid once more, and can come down to us, and live out your three hundred years, before you turn into inanimate, salt foam. Haste, then ! He or you must die before sun-rise ! Our old grandmother has fretted till her white hair has fallen off, as ours has under the witch's scissors. Haste, then ! Do you not perceive those red streaks in the sky ? In a few minutes the sun will rise, and then you must die ! " And they then fetched a deep, deep sigh, as they sank down into the waves.

The little mermaid lifted the scarlet curtain of the tent, and beheld the fair bride resting her

head on the prince's breast ; and she bent down and kissed his beautiful forehead, then looked up at the heavens, where the rosy dawn grew brighter and brighter ; then gazed on the sharp knife, and again turned her eyes towards the prince,



" Then jumped overboard, and felt her body dissolving into foam."

who was calling his bride by her name in his sleep. She alone filled his thoughts, and the mermaid's fingers clutched the knife instinctively—but in another moment she hurled the blade far away into

the waves, that gleamed redly where it fell, as though drops of blood were gurgling up from the water. She gave the prince one last, dying look, and then jumped overboard, and felt her body dissolving into foam.

The sun now rose out of the sea ; its beams threw a kindly warmth upon the cold foam, and the little mermaid did not experience the pangs of death. She saw the bright sun, and above were floating hundreds of transparent, beautiful creatures ; she could still catch a glimpse of the ship's white sails, and of the red clouds in the sky, across the swarms of these lovely beings. Their language was melody, but too ethereal to be heard by human ears, just as no human eye can discern their forms. Though without wings, their lightness poised them in the air. The little mermaid saw that she had a body like theirs, that kept rising higher and higher from out the foam.

"Where am I ?" asked she ; and her voice sounded like that of her companions—so ethereal that no earthly music could give an adequate idea of its sweetness.

"Amongst the daughters of the air !" answered they. "A mermaid has not an immortal soul, and cannot obtain one, unless she wins the love of some human being—her eternal welfare depends on the will of another. But the daughters of the air, although not possessing an immortal soul by nature, can obtain one by their good deeds. We fly

to warm countries and fan the burning atmosphere laden with pestilence, that destroys the sons of man. We diffuse the perfume of flowers through the air to heal and to refresh. When we have striven for three hundred years to do all the good in our power, we then obtain an immortal soul, and share in the eternal happiness of the human race. You, poor little mermaid! have striven with your whole heart like ourselves. You have suffered and endured, and have raised yourself into an ærial spirit, and now your own good works may obtain you an immortal soul after the lapse of three hundred years."

And the little mermaid lifted her brightening eyes to the sun, and for the first time she felt them filled with tears. All was now astir in the ship, and she could see the prince and his beautiful bride looking for her, and then gazing sorrowfully at the pearly foam, as though they knew that she had cast herself into the waves. She then kissed the bride's forehead, and fanned the prince, unseen by either of them, and then mounted, together with the other children of the air, on the rosy cloud that was sailing through the atmosphere.

"Thus shall we glide into the Kingdom of Heaven, after the lapse of three hundred years," said she.

"We may reach it sooner," whispered one of the daughters of the air. "We enter unseen the dwellings of man, and for each day on which we

have met with a good child, who is the joy of his parents, and deserving of their love, the Almighty shortens the time of our trial. The child little thinks, when we fly through the room, and smile for joy at such a discovery, that a year is deducted from the three hundred we have to live. But when we see an ill-behaved or naughty child, we shed tears of sorrow, and every tear adds a day to the time of our probation."

The Girl who Trod on the Loaf



HE story of the girl who trod on the loaf lest she should soil her shoes, and of what happened to her, must be familiar to you. It has been both written and printed.

She was a poor child, but proud and arrogant ; there was a poor foundation in her, as they say. As quite a little girl it was her one delight to get hold of flies and pull off their wings, so that they could only crawl. She took cockchafers and beetles, stuck them on needles, then held a green leaf or a little

piece of paper to their feet, and the poor creatures held fast to it, and turned it about to get off the needle.

"Now the cockchafer is reading!" said little Inger; "see how it turns the leaf!"

As she grew bigger she became worse, instead of better; but she was handsome, and that was her misfortune, for otherwise she would have been more often chastised than she was.

"Your head will meet with some hard blow!" her own mother said. "You have often as a child trodden on my apron, and I am afraid that when you are older you will tread on my heart."

And certainly she did so.

She now came out into the country to be a servant to some people of rank; they treated her as if she had been their own child, and she was dressed as such. She looked well, and grew yet more arrogant.

When she had been out about a twelvemonth, her master said to her, "You ought to go and visit your parents, little Inger."

And she went; but it was in order to show herself, that they might see how fine she had grown. But when she came to the town gate, and saw girls and young men gossiping at the pond, while her mother sat on a stone hard by, with a bundle of firewood, which she had gathered in the forest, and rested herself, then Inger turned away; for she was ashamed that she, with all her fine clothes,

should have for her mother a ragged woman who gathered sticks. It was not because she pitied her that she turned away ; she was only vexed.

And now half a year passed by.

“ You ought to go home one day and call on your old parents, little Inger,” said her mistress. “ Here is a large loaf of wheaten bread you can take to them ; they will be pleased to see you.”

And Inger put on her best clothes and her new shoes, and she raised her skirts and walked carefully, to keep her feet clean and smart ; and I don't blame her for that. But when she came where the path crosses some boggy ground, and water and mud stood a long way in the road, then she flung the loaf into the mud, that she might step on it and come over dry-shod ; then, when she stood with one foot on the loaf and raised the other, the loaf sank with her deeper and deeper : she was quite lost to sight, and there was only a black bubbling pool.

That is the story.

Where had she gone to ? She went down to the bog-wife, who was brewing. The bog-wife is aunt to the elf-maidens, who are pretty well known ; songs have been written about them, and they have been painted ; but about the bog-wife people only know that when the meadows steam in the summer it is because the bog-wife is brewing. It was down into her brewery that Inger sank, and there is no one who can stand that place long. A



"Flung the loaf into the mud, that she might step on it and come over dry-shod."

cesspool is a bright and splendid apartment compared with the bog-wife's brewery ! Every vat stinks so that human beings would certainly faint away, and the vats stand quite close together ; and if there is anywhere a little opening between them where one could squeeze through, still one would find it stopped up by all the wet toads and fat snakes that have become entangled together. Little Inger sank down to this place. All that disgusting living entanglement was so icy cold that she shivered through

all her limbs, and she grew stiffer and stiffer. She stuck to the loaf, and it dragged her just as an amber stud drags a particle of straw.

The bog-wife was at home. The brewery was that day visited by the fiend and his great-grandmother, and she is a venomous old woman who is never unoccupied ; she never goes out without taking her needlework with her, and so she had brought it here. She sewed running-leather to put into men's shoes, to make them restless ; she embroidered lies, and crocheted heedless words that had fallen to the ground—everything was for injury and ruin. Yes, the old great-grandmother knew how to sew, and embroider, and crochet.

She saw Inger, and put up her eye-glass to her eye and looked again at her. "That is a girl with talent," she said ; "I should like to have her as a reminiscence of my visit here : she will make a suitable statue in my great-grandson's ante-room."

And so she took her. In this way little Inger came to the infernal regions. People do not always go down there by the most direct way, but they can come by a roundabout way when they have talent.

It was an endless anteroom ; one turns dizzy with looking forward or looking backward : and there stood there a crowd of weary people, waiting till the door should be opened. They would have to wait a long time ! Great, fat, waddling spiders

spun a web for thousands of years over their feet, and this web snared them as in a trap and held them fast as with copper chains ; and besides that,



"But the worst of all was the horrible hunger which she felt."

there was a perpetual anxiety in every soul, a torturing anxiety. The avaricious man stood there, and had forgotten the key to his money-box, and he knew that it was in the lock. Yes, it would be tedious to repeat all the kinds of pain and worry—they were innumerable. Inger thought it horrid to have to stand like a statue; it seemed as if she had grown to the loaf.

"That happens to one because one wishes to keep one's feet clean!" she said to herself. "See how they are staring at me." Yes, they were all looking at her; their evil inclinations shone out of their eyes and spoke silently from the corners of their mouths; they were dreadful to look at.

"It must be a pleasure

to look at me!" thought little Inger; "I have a pretty face and good clothes!" And now she turned her eyes, for her neck was too stiff to turn. No; how dirty she had become in the bog-wife's brewhouse! she had not thought of that. Her clothes seemed to be covered with slime; a snake had entwined itself in her hair and hung down at the back of her neck, and a toad peeped forth from every fold in her frock and barked like an asthmatic pug. It was very disagreeable. "But the others down here look just as dreadful!" She comforted herself with that reflection.

But the worst of all was the horrible hunger which she felt; could she not then bend herself and break a piece off the loaf she was standing on? No; her back was stiff, her arms and hands were stiff, her whole body was like a stone column. She could only turn her eyes in her head, turn them entirely round, so that they looked out behind, and that was a ghastly sight. And then the flies came. They crept across her eyes, backwards and forwards. She blinked her eyes, but the flies did not fly away, for they could not: their wings had been pulled off, and they had become creeping things. That was a torture, as well as the hunger; and at last it seemed to her as if her inside was feeding upon itself, and she became entirely empty, so horribly empty!

"If this lasts long I shall not be able to endure

it!" she said; but she was obliged to endure it, and it went on and on.

And then there fell a burning tear on her head; it



"They told her story to the children, and the little ones called her 'the wicked Inger.'"

rolled over her face and bosom straight down to the loaf: and then another tear fell, and many

more. Who was weeping over little Inger ? Had she not a mother up on the earth ? Tears of grief, such as a mother weeps over her child, always reach it ; but they do not set it free : they burn, and only cause greater torture. And now that intolerable hunger, and not to be able to reach the loaf which she had trodden on with her foot ! She had now at length a feeling as if everything within her must have eaten itself up, she was like a slender, hollow reed that drew every sound into itself ; she plainly heard everything that related to her which was said on the earth, and what she heard was evil and harsh. Her mother wept, certainly, and was deeply distressed, but she said : “ Pride goes before a fall ! It was thy misfortune, Inger ; but how thou hast grieved thy mother ! ”

Her mother and every one up there knew of her sin, that she had trodden on the loaf, and had sunk through and disappeared ; the cowherd had related it, for he had seen it from the hill-side.

“ How hast thou grieved thy mother, Inger ! ” said the mother ; “ yes, I thought as much ! ”

“ Would that I had never been born ! ” thought Inger ; “ it would have been much better for me. But it can’t be helped, now that my mother cries.”

She heard how her master and mistress—the worthy folk who had been like parents to her—spoke : “ She was a sinful child,” they said ; “ she did not respect the gifts of Heaven, but trod

them under her feet. The door of grace will be narrow for her to enter at."

"They should have restrained me better!" thought Inger; "they should have beaten the fancies out of me, if I had any."

She heard that an entire ballad was written about her: "The proud girl who trod on the loaf lest she should soil her shoes"; and it was sung all round the country.

"That one should hear so much for that! and suffer so much for that!" thought Inger; "certainly the others ought also to be punished for their faults! Yes, indeed, then there would be many to punish! Oh, how I am tormented!"

And her temper became even harder than her body.

"Down here in this society one can't become better! And I don't wish to be better! See how they stare!"

And she felt angry and ill-disposed against everybody.

"Now they have something to tell up there! Oh, how I am tormented!"

And she heard that they told her story to the children, and the little ones called her "the wicked Inger." "She was so loathsome!" they said, "so hideous! it was quite right for her to be tortured!"

There were always hard words against her in the children's mouths.

But one day, as resentment and hunger fretted within her hollow form, and she heard her name mentioned and her story told before an innocent child, a little girl, she perceived that the little one burst out crying at the story of the proud, vain Inger.

"But will she never come up again?" asked the little girl. And the answer was:

"She will never come up again."

"But if she now will ask for forgiveness, and never do it again?"

"But she will not ask for forgiveness," they said.

"I do so wish that she would!" said the little girl, and she was quite inconsolable. "I will give my doll's house if she may come up! It is so horrible for poor Inger!"

And the expression went straight down into Inger's heart, as if it did her good.

It was the first time that there was any one who said, "Poor Inger!" and did not add anything about its being her own fault. A little innocent child wept and prayed for her. It was



" 'I do so wish she would,' said the little girl, and she was quite inconsolable."

so strange that it made her wish to weep herself ; but she could not weep, and that also was a torture.

As years passed in the upper world—for down below there was no alteration—she heard sounds from above less frequently, for there was less said about her ; then one day she noticed a sigh : “ Inger ! Inger ! how thou hast grieved me ! I said it would be so ! ” It was her mother, as she was dying.

She sometimes heard her name mentioned by her old master and mistress ; and it was the gentlest word that her mistress said : “ I wonder whether I shall ever see thee again, Inger ! . One does not know where one may come to ! ”

But Inger understood well enough that her worthy mistress would never come where she was.

In this manner again a long and bitter time passed.

Then Inger again heard her name mentioned, and she saw overhead what looked like two clear, shining stars ; they were two gentle eyes, which were closing on the earth. So many years had passed since that time when the little girl wept inconsolably for “ poor Inger,” that the child had become an old woman whom Heaven would now call to her rest, and just in that moment when all the thoughts of her whole life rose up, she remembered also how, as a little child, she had been caused to weep bitterly when she heard the story

of Inger. That time and that impression stood out so vividly before the old woman in the hour of her death that she exclaimed quite loud : " O Lord, my God, I do not wonder that I, as well as Inger, have often trampled upon the gifts of Thy blessings without thinking of them ; I wonder that I have not also talked with pride in my heart : but Thou in Thy mercy hast not suffered me to sink, but hast held me up ; leave not hold of me in my last hour ! "

And the eyes of the old woman closed, and the eyes of her soul opened to hidden things, and, as Inger was so strongly present in her last thoughts, she saw her—saw where she had been dragged deep down—and at that sight the gentle lady burst into tears ; in the kingdom of heaven she stood like a child, and wept for poor Inger. The tears and the prayers sounded like an echo down in the hollow, empty form that enclosed the imprisoned, tortured soul which was overwhelmed by all that unthought-of kindness from above. An angel of God wept over her ! Wherefore was this granted to her ? It seemed as if her tortured soul recalled every deed of her earthly life, and Inger trembled as she wept such tears as she had never before been able to weep. Sorrow for her own condition filled her ; she thought that for her the gate of mercy could never be opened : and when, in her contrition, she acknowledged her unworthiness, a ray of light shone down into the depths of the

abyss. The ray came with a power stronger than that of sunshine which thaws a snow man that the boys have set up in the yard, and then—much more quickly than a snowflake, falling on a child's warm mouth, melts away into a drop—Inger's petrified form evaporated; a little bird soared like a flash of lightning up to the world of men. But it was fearful and afraid of all about it; it was ashamed of itself in the presence of all living creatures, and hastily sought shelter in a dark hole which it discovered in a ruined wall. Here it sat and crouched, its whole body quivering; it could not utter a sound, for it had no voice. It sat for a long time before it was sufficiently at rest to see and notice all the splendour around it. Everything was indeed splendid! The air was so fresh and mild, the moon shone so clear, trees and bushes exhaled their fragrance, and it was so comfortable where it sat, and its plumage was so clean and delicate. No, every created thing seemed still to be preserved in love and splendour. All the thoughts that arose within the bird's breast wished to break forth into song, but the bird could not sing; fain would he have sung as the cuckoo and nightingale do in the spring. Heaven, that hears the silent adoration of the worm, here also took note of the hymn which arose in harmonious thoughts, even as the psalm sounded in David's breast before he gave it words and melody.

For some weeks these silent songs grew and



“ ‘ There is a sea-swallow flying away over the sea ! ’ said the children.

increased in its thoughts ; they must break out at last, at the first stroke of the wings in a kind action, if such might be done.

Now came the holy festival of Christmas. A peasant set up a pole close to the wall, and tied a sheaf of oats which had not been threshed to the top, so that the birds of the air might have a merry Christmas and a joyful meal at that holy time.

And the sun rose on Christmas morning, and shone on the sheaf of oats, and all the twittering birds flew about the pole where their dinner was ; then the little bird from the wall also chirped "pee, pee !" then the swelling thoughts burst forth into sound, then the weak piping became a complete hymn of joy, the thought of a kind action was aroused, and the bird flew out from its shelter. It was well known in the kingdom of heaven what it had been before it was a bird.

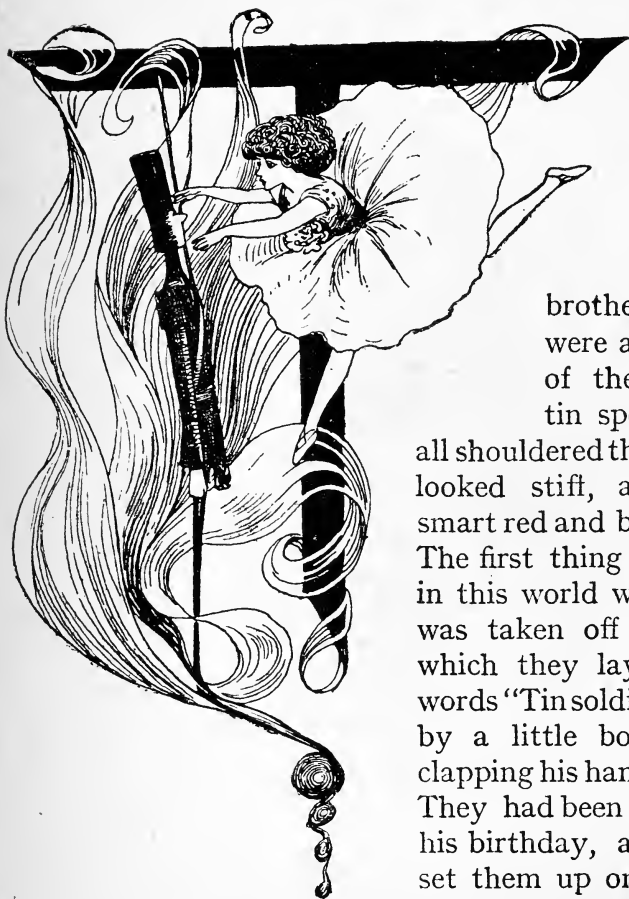
The winter set in severely, the lakes were covered with thick ice, the birds and forest creatures found it hard to get food. The little bird flew out in the highroad, and there, in the tracks of the sledges, looked for and found here and there a grain of corn ; at baiting-places it found a few crumbs. It only ate a single one of these, and called on all the other starving sparrows that they might find food here. Then it flew to the towns, and looked carefully about ; and wherever a kind hand had scattered bread for the birds outside

the window, there it ate only a single crumb and gave all to the others.

In the course of the winter the bird had collected and given away so many crumbs that together they weighed as much as the whole of the loaf which little Inger had trodden on lest she should soil her shoes, and when the last crumb of bread was found and given away the bird's grey wings became white and spread themselves out.

"There is a sea-swallow flying away over the sea!" said the children who saw the white bird. At one instant it plunged into the sea, at another it soared aloft in the clear sunshine; it shone so that it was not possible to see where it had gone to—they said that it flew straight into the sun.

The Constant Tin Soldier



H E R E
were once
five-and-
twenty
tin sol-
diers that
were all

brothers, for they
were all made out
of the same old
tin spoon. They

all shouldered their muskets,
looked stiff, and wore a
smart red and blue uniform.
The first thing they heard
in this world when the lid
was taken off the box in
which they lay, were the
words "Tin soldiers!" spoken
by a little boy, who was
clapping his hands with joy.
They had been given him on
his birthday, and he now
set them up on the table.

Each soldier was exactly the image of the other, except one that was a little different to the rest ; and he had only one leg, having been melted the last of the batch, when there was not enough tin left. Yet he stood as firmly on his one leg as the others on their two legs ; and it was precisely he who became a remarkable character.

The table on which they were placed was strewn with a number of other toys, the most attractive amongst them being a pretty little paper castle. One might see through the tiny windows into the rooms. In front of the castle stood little trees, round a small piece of looking-glass, that was meant to represent a transparent lake. Wax swans were swimming on its surface, that reflected back their image. This was all very pretty ; but the prettiest of all was a diminutive lady, who stood at the castle's open door. She, too, was cut out of paper ; but she wore a dress of the clearest muslin and a narrow blue ribbon over her shoulders, like a scarf ; and in the middle of this was placed a tinsel rose, as big as her whole face. The little lady stretched out both her arms, for she was a dancer ; and then she lifted her leg so high that the tin soldier lost sight of it, and therefore concluded that she had only one, like himself.

“She would make a fit wife for me,” thought he ; “only she is very genteel, and lives in a castle ; while I have nothing but a box to live in, and we are five-and-twenty of us in *that*. It would

be no place for a lady ! Still I must try and scrape acquaintance with her." And he laid himself at full length behind a snuff-box that happened to be on the table, and from thence he could peep at the delicate little lady, who continued standing on one leg without losing her balance.

Towards evening, all the other tin soldiers were put back into the box, and the people of the house went to bed ; so now the playthings began to play at various games. The tin soldiers rattled in their box, for they wanted to join the rest, but they could not lift up the lid. The nut-crackers threw somersaults, and the pencil jumped about the table ; and there was such a din that the canary-bird awoke, and began to speak, and in poetry, too. The only ones who did not move from their places, were the tin soldier and the dancer. She stood on tiptoe, and stretched out both her arms ; and he was just as persevering on his one leg. He did not take his eyes off her a single moment.

The clock now struck twelve, when—crack ! up flew the lid of the snuff-box ; there was no snuff in it, but a little black gnome, for it was a puzzle.

"Tin soldier," said the gnome, "don't be hankering after forbidden fruit."

But the tin soldier pretended not to have heard him.

"Only wait till to-morrow," observed the gnome.

Next morning, when the children were up, the tin soldier was placed in the window ; and whether it was the gnome, or the draught, that did it,



“ Though they had nearly trodden upon him, they could not manage to find him.”

certain it is that the window flew open, and down the soldier fell, head over heels from the third story into the street below. It was a tremendous

fall ! His cap and bayonet stuck fast between the flag-stones, while his leg stood upright in the air.

The servant-girl and the little boy went downstairs immediately to look after him ; but, though they had nearly trodden upon him, they could not manage to find him. If the tin soldier had but called out, " Here am I ! " they might have found him ; but he did not think it consistent with his uniform to cry out for help.

It now began to rain. The drops fell faster and faster, and there was soon a regular shower. When it was over, two boys that were idling about the streets happened to pass by.

" Look," said one of them, " there lies a tin soldier. He shall have a sail in a boat."

And so they made a boat out of a newspaper, and placed the soldier inside it, and set him floating down the gutter. The two boys ran by his side, clapping their hands. But, dear me ! what waves there were in the gutter, and what a strong current ! It was, to be sure, at high water, owing to the rain. The paper boat rocked up and down, and sometimes whirled round so fast that the tin soldier trembled ; yet he remained at his post, made no faces, looked straight before him, and shouldered his musket.

On a sudden, the boat shot under a long bridge that lay across the gutter, where it was as dark as in his box.

“Where am I going to?” thought he. “This must surely be the gnome’s fault! Oh! if the little lady was but here at my side in the boat, it might then be as dark as it pleased, and I should not care.”

A huge rat, that lived under the bridge of the gutter, now made his appearance.

“Have you a pass?” inquired the rat. “Come, out with it!” But the tin soldier remained silent, and held his musket still tighter.

The boat flew past, and the rat followed. How he did gnash his teeth, and called out to the woodshavings and the straw: “Stop him! stop him! He has not paid the toll, nor shown his pass.”

But the stream gushed on more madly still, and the tin soldier could already see daylight at the point where the bridge ended; at the same time, however, he heard a rushing sound, well calculated to appal even the bravest. Only fancy! just where the bridge left off, the waters widened into a large sheet that fell into the mouth of a sewer; and such a situation was as perilous to him as it would be for us to sail down a waterfall in a boat.

He was now so near the precipice that he could no longer keep himself back. The boat dashed on, and the poor tin soldier kept as stiff as ever he could, that nobody should say of him that he had even so much as winked an eye. The boat now spun round three or four times, till it was filled with water to the edge—and sink it must!



"The boat flew past, and the rat followed."

The tin soldier stood up to his neck in water, while the boat sank deeper and deeper, the paper went gradually to rags, and the waters now closed over the tin soldier's head. He thought of the elegant little dancer, whom he should never see again, and in his ears rang the burden of the old song :—

'On, soldier! on—on—though swords clash and shots rattle,
'Tis thy fate to find death in the midst of the battle.'

And now the paper fell in two, and down the tin soldier was flung—but was instantly swallowed up by a huge fish.

"Oh! how dark it was inside the fish!—worse a great deal than under the bridge over the gutter, and, besides, it was such a narrow place. But the tin soldier retained his fortitude, and lay at full length with his gun on his shoulder.

The fish swam about, making the most frightful contortions. At last he became quite quiet. Then a flash of lightning seemed to dart through him, daylight appeared, and a voice called out, "The tin soldier, as I'm alive!" The fish had been caught, taken to market, and sold, and was now in the kitchen, where the cook was opening it with a large knife. She picked up the soldier by the waist, between her finger and thumb, and carried him into the sitting-room, where everybody was desirous of seeing such a celebrated man, who had travelled about inside a fish. But the tin

soldier was not the more conceited for that. They placed him on the table, and there—what odd events do happen in the world, to be sure! The tin soldier found himself once more in the identical room in which he had been before, and saw the same children, and the same playthings on the table, together with the noble castle and the elegant little dancer. She was still standing on one leg, and still holding up the other—she, too, was constant. This touched the tin soldier so deeply that he was fit to weep tin, only he restrained himself, as in duty bound. He looked at her, and she looked at him, but they said nothing.

Then one of the little boys took up the soldier and flung him right into the stove; nor did he give any reason for so doing, which plainly showed that the gnome in the box was at the bottom of it all.

The tin soldier was now lighted up by the flames, and felt a tremendous degree of heat; but whether it proceeded from the real fire, or from the fire of love, he could not exactly tell. His colour was completely gone, but whether this had happened during his travels, or was merely the effects of grief, nobody could guess. He looked at the little lady, and she looked at him, and he felt himself melting away; still he stood firm with his gun on his shoulder. The door now happened to open, and the wind caught up the dancer, who fluttered like a sylph right into the

stove beside the tin soldier, and was instantly consumed by the flames. The tin soldier melted down to a lump, and next day, when the maid



"When the maid raked out the ashes, she found him in the shape of a little tin heart."

raked out the ashes, she found him in the shape of a little tin heart. Of the dancer nothing remained but the tinsel rose, and that was as black as a cinder.

The Snow Queen

IN SEVEN STORIES

STORY THE FIRST—WHICH TREATS OF A LOOKING-GLASS AND ITS BROKEN FRAGMENTS



LISTEN to me, and the story shall begin. When we shall have got to the end, we shall know more than we do now ; for it is about a very wicked hobgoblin ! He was one of the craftiest that ever lived ; in short, he was the arch-fiend in person. One day, when he was in a facetious humour, he made a looking-glass which possessed the power of diminishing, almost to a nonentity, everything good and beautiful mirrored on its surface, while all that was worthless or ill-looking was brought out into still stronger relief. Seen in this glass, the most lovely landscapes looked like cooked spinach, and the best amongst mankind appeared repulsive, and as if standing on his head. The countenances were so distorted that they were

unrecognizable ; and if one had a single freckle, one would have been led to believe that it extended over one's nose and mouth. The arch-fiend said this was extremely entertaining. If a good, pious thought entered a human being's brain, a flaw appeared in the looking-glass, and made the arch-fiend laugh at his cunning invention. All those who attended the hobgoblin's school—for he kept one—spread the fame of the wonderful glass in all directions, and maintained that people might now see, for the first time, how the world and its inhabitants really looked. They carried the glass about everywhere, till at last there was not a land nor a human being left but what had been seen distorted on its surface. They now presumed to attempt to scale the regions of the blessed ; but the higher they flew with the glass the more it cracked. They could scarcely hold it fast, yet they flew higher and higher, and still nearer the sun, till the glass shook so dreadfully in the process of fusion that it slipped out of their hands, and fell upon the earth, where it split into millions and billions of pieces ; and by this means it became still more mischievous than heretofore, for some of the shivers were scarcely so large as a grain of sand, and these flew about the world, and when they lodged in anybody's eyes, there they remained, and the person thenceforth saw everything through a distorted medium, or only approved the perverse side of a question ; for every minute fragment of

the glass possessed the same qualities that formerly belonged to the whole glass. Some human beings had a piece right through their heart—and this was shocking, for it made their hearts as cold as a lump of ice. Some of these fragments were so large that they served for window-panes ; but it would not have done to look at one's friends through such panes as those. Other pieces were set as spectacles, and it was hard for those who wore them to see anything in its proper light, or to have the least sense of justice ; and the arch-fiend laughed till he shook his sides, so amazingly was he tickled by all the mischief that arose. And many little glass shivers flew besides through the air, as we shall presently hear.

STORY THE SECOND—A LITTLE BOY AND A LITTLE GIRL



IN a large town, where the population was so dense and the houses so closely packed that there was no room for everybody to have a little garden, and consequently the bulk of the inhabitants were obliged to rest satisfied with the possession of a

few plants in flower-pots, there lived two poor children, who had a somewhat larger garden than a mere flower-pot. They were not brother and sister, though they loved one another quite as much as if they had been.

Their parents lived opposite each other, in two garrets, where the roof of a neighbouring house joined theirs, and a gutter ran all along between the two roofs. In each house was a little window, and, by stepping over the gutter, it was easy to go from one window to the other.

The parents on both sides had a large wooden box, in which they reared pot-herbs for their own use, and a little rose-tree. There was one in each box, and they flourished amazingly! The parents now took it into their heads to place these boxes across the gutter, so that they nearly reached from one window to another, and looked like two flowery banks. Blooming peas flung their tendrils over the edge of the boxes, and the rose-trees put forth their long sprigs, that twined about the windows, and leaned towards each other. In short, it was almost like a triumphal arch of leaves and flowers.

As the boxes were very high, and the children knew that they must not climb up to them, they often had leave to get down out of the window to each other, and to sit on their little stools under the roses. And then they played together so prettily.

In winter there was an end to such pleasures.

The windows were frequently covered with frost ; but then they warmed copper-pieces on the stove, and laid a warm coin on the frozen pane, and that made such a nice round hole to peep through. And then a soft, bright eye beamed from each window—this was the little boy and the little girl looking at each other. His name was Kay, and hers Gerda. In summer they needed but to take a leap to be side by side, but in winter they had many stairs to go down, and then to go up again, before they could meet ; and now the snowflakes were flying about abroad.

“The white bees are swarming,” said grandmother.

“Have they, too, a queen bee ?” asked the little boy.

“To be sure,” said the grandmother ; “she is flying in the thickest of the swarm. She is the largest of them all, and never remains upon the ground, but flutters upwards again towards the black clouds. She often flies through the streets of the town at midnight, and peeps in at the windows, and then they freeze into such odd shapes, and look like flowers.”

“Yes, I have seen that,” said both the children, and now they knew it was true.

“Can the Snow Queen come in here ?” asked the little girl.

“Let her come,” said the boy, “and I’ll put her on the warm stove, and then she must melt.”

But grandmother stroked his hair, and told them other stories.

In the evening, when little Kay had returned home and was half undressed, he climbed on a chair up to the window, and peeped through the little hole, when he saw some snow-flakes falling, the largest among which alighted on the edge of one of the flower-boxes, and kept increasing and increasing till it became a full-grown woman, dressed in the most ærial white gauze, that seemed to consist of millions of star-like flakes fastened together. She was delicately beautiful, but made of ice—dazzling, glittering ice. Yet was she living ; her eyes sparkled like two bright stars, and there seemed to be no rest or calmness in them. She nodded towards the window, and waved her hand. The little boy was frightened, and jumped down from the chair, and then he thought he saw a large bird fly past the window.

On the following day there was a clear frost ; and then at last the spring came. The sun shone, the earth was clothed in green, the swallows built their nests, the windows were opened, and the little children once more sat in their small garden on the roof, high above all the other storys.

The roses blossomed most beautifully that summer. The little girl had learned a psalm in which roses were mentioned, and the roses reminded her of it ; and she sang it to the little boy, and he joined her in singing :—

"The roses bloom but one short hour, then die;
But th' infant Jesus ever lives on high!"

And the little ones held each other by the hand, and kissed the roses, and looked up at God's bright sunshine, and addressed it as though it were the infant Jesus. Oh, those were pleasant summer days! It was so delightful up there near the fresh rose-trees, that seemed never to mean to have done blossoming.

Kay and Gerda sat looking in their book at the pictures of quadrupeds and birds, when, just as the great church clock struck five, Kay said: "Oh, dear! Something pricks my heart, and something has flown into my eye."

The little girl put her arm round his neck, and his eyes twinkled, but there was nothing to be seen in them. "I think it is gone," said he; but gone it was not. It was one of those bits of glass no bigger than a grain of sand, being a particle of the magic glass, which we have not forgotten—of that nasty glass that made everything great and good look small and ugly, while all that was bad and disagreeable stood out in strong relief, and every fault in anything became immediately perceptible. Poor Kay had likewise received a grain right through his heart, which was soon to grow as hard as a lump of ice. He now ceased to feel any pain, but there the grain remained.

"Why do you cry?" asked he. "You look so ugly! Nothing ails me. Fie!" cried he

suddenly, "there's a worm-hole in that rose. And look, that one is quite crooked! Altogether they are nasty roses, as bad as the boxes in which they are set." And then he kicked the boxes, and tore off the two roses.

"Kay, what are you doing?" cried the little girl; and when he saw how frightened she was, he tore off another rose, and then leaped in at his window away from sweet little Gerda.

The next time she brought out the picture-book, he said it was only fit for children in swaddling clothes; and when his grandmother related a story, he was sure to interrupt her with some "ifs" and "buts"; and whenever he could manage it, he would place himself behind her, put on a pair of spectacles, and speak just like her; and he mimicked her so well that everybody laughed. He could soon mimic both the voice and the gait of every soul in the street. Kay was sure to imitate to the life the disagree-



"He climbed up to the window."

able attributes of each person, and people said, "That boy will surely be a genius." But it was only the bit of glass that had stuck in his eye and in his heart, and which made him tease even little Gerda, who loved him so dearly.

His amusements were now quite different to what they were formerly : they savoured more of a grown person. One winter's day, when it had snowed, he came with a burning-glass, and held out the skirt of his blue coat to catch some flakes of snow.

"Now look in the glass, Gerda," said he. And every flake was magnified, and looked like a beautiful flower or a decagonal star ; and very pretty it was to see. "Now is not this scientific ? " said Kay ; "and how far more interesting than real flowers. There is not a fault in them ; they are quite correct, provided they don't melt away."

Soon after Kay appeared with thick gloves on his hands, and his sledge at his back, and called out to Gerda. "I have leave to go to the great square, where other boys are playing." And away he went.

The boldest among the boys who used to play there often fastened their sledges to the carts of the country people who passed by, and went a good way with them. And this amused them vastly. In the height of their play there came along a large sledge painted white, in which sat some one huddled up in a rough white skin, and

wearing a rough white cap. The sledge went twice round the square, and Kay, having hastily bound his little sledge to it, drove away in its wake. It went faster and still faster right down the adjoining street. The driver turned round and gave Kay a friendly nod, just as if they were acquainted ; and every time that Kay wanted to unfasten his little sledge the driver nodded again, and Kay sat still ; and thus they drove out at one of the gates of the town. It now began to snow so heavily that the little boy could not see a hand's length before him ; but on they went. And though he suddenly let go the string, in order to get loose from the large sledge, it proved of no use ; for his little craft still clung fast to the other, and they went with the speed of the wind. He then screamed aloud, but nobody heard him ; and the snow kept fluttering about, and the sledge kept flying, and anon there was a violent shock, as if they were leaping over hedges and ditches. The boy was frightened, and tried to repeat the Lord's Prayer ; but he could only think of the multiplication-table.

The flakes of snow grew larger and larger, and at last looked like great white fowls. These suddenly jumped on one side, the large sledge stopped, and the person who had driven it rose. The skin and the cap were of snow, and he saw a tall and slender lady of dazzling whiteness—and this was the Snow Queen !

“ We have come along at a good pace,” said

she ; “ but if you don't wish to freeze, creep into my bear-skin.” And she placed him beside her in the sledge, and wrapped the skin round him, and it was just as if he were sinking into a snow-drift.

“ Are you still freezing ? ” said she, as she kissed his forehead. Oh ! that kiss was colder than ice ! It seemed to shoot right through his heart, half



“ And she placed him beside her in the sledge, and wrapped the skin round him.”

of which was already a lump of ice, and he felt as if he were going to die—but only for a moment, and then he was better than ever, and ceased to feel the coldness of the atmosphere that surrounded him.

“ My sledge ! Don't forget my sledge ! ” That was his first thought ; and so it was fastened to one of the white fowls, who flew behind, with the sledge on its back. The Snow Queen kissed Kay

once more, and then he clean forgot little Gerda, and his grandmother, and everybody at home.

“Now you shall have no more kisses,” said she, “or I should kiss you to death.”

Kay looked at her, and she was beautiful to behold. A more intellectual or lovely countenance he could not imagine ; and she no longer seemed to him to be made of ice, as she did formerly, when she sat outside the window and nodded to him. In his eyes she appeared perfect ; nor did she inspire him with the slightest fear. He told her that he could reckon by heart, and even reduce fractions ; and that he knew how many square miles there were in the land, and the number of its inhabitants. And she continued smiling ; and then he thought that what he knew was not sufficient, and he looked up towards the vast expanse of air above them, and she flew with him high above the black clouds, where the storm was raging ; and it seemed as if it were singing old songs. Then they flew over forests, and lakes, across the sea and the lands beyond. Under them blew the cold wind, the wolves howled, the snow crackled, and the black, cawing crows were hovering about ; but high above all shone the clear large moon, and Kay witnessed the long, long winter's night. In the daytime he slept at the feet of the Snow Queen.

STORY THE THIRD

THE FLOWER-GARDEN OF THE
CONJURING WOMAN

UT how fared little Gerda when Kay did not return? Where could he be? Nobody knew, nobody could give any tidings of him. Only the boys said they had seen him fasten his sledge to a mighty large one that had driven through the

streets and out by the town gate. Nobody knew whither he had gone ; many tears were shed ; little Gerda cried so bitterly and so long. And then people said he was dead, that he had got drowned in the river that flowed past the school. Oh ! what long, dreary winter days were those !

The spring now returned, and brought a warmer sunshine. " Kay is dead and gone," said little Gerda.

" I don't believe it," answered the sunshine.

" He is dead and gone !" said she to the swallows.

" We don't believe it," answered they ; and at length little Gerda ceased to believe it any longer.

" I will put on my new red shoes," said she one

morning, "those which Kay never saw, and then I'll go down to the river and ask after him."

It was quite early. She kissed her old grandmother, who was yet asleep, put on the red shoes, and went all alone out through the town gate, towards the river.

"Is it true that you have taken my little play-fellow away from me?" said she. "I will make you a present of my red shoes if you will give him me back."

And it seemed to her as if the waves nodded to her in a singular fashion; and then she took off her red shoes, which she was so fond of, and threw them into the water. But they fell near the bank, and the little waves brought them back to land, just as if the river would not accept of what she most valued, as it had not little Kay to give in exchange. But now she fancied that she had not thrown the shoes out far enough, and so she crept into a boat that lay amongst the sedges, and went to the farthest end of it, and then flung the shoes from thence into the water. But, as the boat was not fastened, her motion set it gliding away from the strand. Perceiving this, she hastened to get out of the boat, but before she had time to do so, it was above an ell distant from land, and soon floated along still faster.

Little Gerda was now frightened, and began to cry; only nobody heard her except the sparrows, and they could not carry her ashore. But they

flew along the banks, and, as if to comfort her, they kept singing, "Here we are! Here we are!" The boat followed the tide. Then Gerda



"A little house with strange red and blue windows. It had, besides, a thatched roof, and before it stood two wooden soldiers, who presented arms to all who sailed past."

sat still, with only her stockings on her feet; her little red shoes followed in the wake of the boat, but without being able to reach it, as it went much faster.

The banks on each side of the river were very

pretty. There were beautiful flowers, aged trees, and grassy slopes, on which sheep and cows were grazing; but not a human being was to be seen.

"Perhaps the river will carry me to little Kay," thought Gerda; and then she grew more cheerful, and rose and looked for hours at the pretty green banks of the river, till she reached a large cherry orchard, in which stood a little house with strange red and blue windows. It had, besides, a thatched roof, and before it stood two wooden soldiers, who presented arms to all who sailed past.

Gerda called to them, thinking they were alive, but of course they did not answer. She now approached them, and the tide drove the boat straight towards the shore.

Gerda called out in a still louder voice, when a very old woman, leaning on a crutch, came out of the house. She wore a broad hat to screen her from the sun, and it was painted with the prettiest flowers.

"You poor little child!" said the old woman: "to think of your coming out into the wide world on this broad and rapid stream!" and the old woman waded through the water, towed the boat ashore with her crutch, and lifted little Gerda out.

Gerda was glad to be once more on dry land, although she was somewhat afraid of the strange old woman.

"Come and tell us who you are, and how you came hither," said she.

And Gerda told her all ; and the old woman shook her head, and said, "Hem, hem !" And after



Gerda had told her everything, and had asked in turn if she had not seen little Kay, the woman said he had not yet passed that way, but he might come still ; and so she had better take heart, and taste her cherries, and look at her flowers, that were prettier than any picture-book, for every one of them could tell a story. She then took Gerda by the hand, and led her into the house, and the old woman shut the door.

The windows were very high, and the panes were red, blue, and yellow, so that the light shone through them in a variety of strange colours. But

"While she was eating, the old woman combed her hair with a golden comb."

on the table were the finest cherries, and Gerda was allowed to eat as many of them as she chose. While she was eating, the old woman combed her hair with a golden comb, and her yellow locks curled and looked beautifully glossy round her cheerful little face, that was round and fresh as a rose.

“I have long wished for such a nice little girl,” said the old woman, “and now you shall see how comfortably we shall live together.” And while she was combing little Gerda’s hair, Gerda forgot more and more all about her adopted brother Kay, for the old woman was learned in witchcraft, though not a wicked sorceress : she only made use of magic arts for her amusement, and because she wished to keep little Gerda. Therefore she went into the garden, and extended her crutch towards all the rose-trees, every one of which, however blooming, sank into the dark ground, without leaving a trace of where it had stood. The old crone was fearful lest the sight of rose-trees would have reminded Gerda of her own, when she would have recollected little Kay, and run away.

She now took Gerda into the garden. How fragrant and how lovely it was ! Every imaginable flower, and for every season too, were to be seen there in full bloom. No picture-book could be more varied or more beautiful. Gerda jumped for joy at the sight, and played till the sun sank behind the tall cherry-trees, and then she lay down

in an elegant bed with red silk pillows, stuffed with variegated violets, and slept and dreamed as pleasantly as any queen on her wedding-day.

Next morning she was free to play again with the flowers in the warm sunshine ; and many days flew by in the same manner. Gerda knew each



" Gerda knew every flower."

flower ; but numerous as were the flowers, there still seemed to be one missing, although she could not tell which it was. One day, however, as she sat and gazed at the old woman's garden hat with its painted flowers, the prettiest among them happened to be a rose. The old woman had forgotten to take it out of the hat when she buried the others in

the earth. But that is the way when one's thoughts are not always present. "What! are there no roses here?" said Gerda, jumping amongst the flower-beds, and looking for what, alas! was not to be found. She then sat down and cried, and her tears fell just on the spot where one of the rose-trees had sunk into the ground; and when her warm tears bedewed the earth, the rose-tree shot up once more as blooming as ever, and Gerda embraced it, and kissed the roses, and thought of the lovely roses at home, and with them of little Kay.

"Oh, how I have been detained!" said the little girl; "I wanted to look for little Kay. Do you not know where he is?" asked she of the roses. "Do you think he is dead?"

"He is not dead," answered the roses; "we have been into the ground, where all the dead lie, and Kay was not there."

"I thank you," said little Gerda, and went to the others flowers, and peeped into each calyx, and asked, "Do you know where little Kay is?"

But each flower stood dreaming in the sun, and thinking of its own story; and Gerda heard a great many of these, but none of the flowers knew anything about Kay.

What said the yellow lily?

"Do you hear the drum? Boom! boom! It has only two sounds; it always says 'Boom! boom!' Listen to the dirge of the women, and

the call of the priests. The Hindoo widow stands, wrapped in her long red mantle, on the funeral pile; the flames encircle her and her husband's dead body. But the Hindoo widow thinks of the



" 'I don't understand anything about it,' said little Gerda."

living ones who surround her, and of him whose eyes shine brighter than the flames—of him whose fiery eyes affect her heart far more than the flames

that will consume her body to ashes. Can the flame of the heart be extinguished in the flames of a funeral pile ? ”

“ I don’t understand anything about it,” said little Gerda.

“ That is my story,” said the yellow lily.

What said the bindweed ?

“ An old feudal castle hangs over the narrow crossway ; thick house-leek is climbing, leaf by leaf, up its old red walls and round the balcony, where stands a fair maiden, who bends over the railing, and looks into the road below. No rose on its spray is fresher than she ; no apple-blossom when blown off the tree floats more lightly than she walks ; and how her gorgeous silk gown rustles ! ‘ Is he not yet coming ? ’ ”

“ Do you mean Kay ? ” asked little Gerda.

“ I’m speaking of my story—of my dream,” replied the bindweed.

What said the little snowdrop ?

“ Between the trees hangs a plant fastened by ropes ; it is a swing, and two little girls, in snow-white dresses, and with long green ribbons fluttering from their bonnets, sit swinging themselves. Their brother, who is bigger than they, stands on the swing ; he has flung his arm round the rope to steady himself, for in one hand he holds a little bowl, and in the other a clay pipe. He is blowing soap-bubbles ; the swing keeps going, and the

pretty variegated bubbles fly about, while the last still clings to the stem of the pipe, and rocks in the wind. The swing keeps going ; the little black dog, as light as the bubbles, raises himself on his hind paws, and will get into the swing amongst the rest ; and off goes the swing, and the dog falls, barks, and is angry ; the children tease him, and the bubbles burst. A rocking plank, and scattered foam—such is my song.”

“ It may be all very pretty, but you tell it in so mournful a tone, and you don’t even mention little Kay.”

What said the hyacinths ?

“ There were three beautiful sisters, most delicate and transparent ; one was dressed in red, the other in blue, and the third in pure white ; and they danced, hand in hand, near the silent lake, in the bright moonshine. They were no elves, but daughters of the earth. There was a sweet fragrance, and the girls disappeared in the wood. The fragrance waxed stronger ; three coffins, in which lay the beautiful girls, glided from the thicket across the lake : the glow-worms flew beside them, like so many little floating torches. Are the dancing girls asleep, or are they dead ? The perfume of the flowers says they are corpses, and the evening bell is tolling their knell.

“ You make me quite sad,” said little Gerda. “ You smell so strong that you make me think of the dead girls. Alas ! is little Kay really dead ?



" Little Gerda ran forth, with bare feet, into the wide world."

The roses who went down into the earth say he is not."

"Ding, dong!" sounded the hyacinth bells. "We are not tolling for little Kay, for we don't know him; we are merely singing our song, the only one we can sing."

And Gerda then went up to the buttercup, that peeped out of its shining green leaves.

"You are a bright little sun," said Gerda; "tell me, if you know, where I can find my play-fellow?"

And the buttercup sparkled so prettily and looked at Gerda. What song could the buttercup sing? Not one that said anything about Kay.

"The bright sunshine shone warmly, one spring morning, upon a little courtyard. The beams glided down the white walls of the neighbouring house, and close by bloomed the first yellow flower, and sparkled like gold in the warm sunshine. The old grandmother sat out in the air on her chair, and her granddaughter, a poor and pretty serving-girl, returned home from a short visit. She kissed her grandmother. There was gold—the gold of the heart—in that blessed kiss. There was gold in the sunbeams of that morning, and she was worth her weight in gold. That's my little story," said the buttercup.

"My poor old grandmother," sighed Gerda. "Yes, no doubt she is longing to see me, and

fretting about me as she did about little Kay. But I'll soon go home, and bring Kay with me. It is no use asking the flowers, who know nothing but their own song : they can give me no tidings." And then she tucked up her little gown that she might run the faster ; but the narcissus caught her foot as she was jumping over it : so she stopped short, and looked at the tall yellow flower, and said, " Perhaps you know something ? " And she stooped down close to the narcissus, and what did it tell ?

" I can see myself to the very life ! " said the narcissus. " Oh ! oh ! how beautifully I do smell ! Up there, in that small room with a balcony, is a little dancer, who stands sometimes on one leg and sometimes on both legs ; she tramples on the whole world : she is nothing but deceit from head to foot. She pours water out of the teapot upon a piece of stuff she holds in her hand, which is her bodice. Cleanliness is a virtue ! Her white dress hangs upon a peg—that, too, has been washed in the teapot, and dried upon the roof. She puts it on, and wraps a saffron-coloured handkerchief round her throat, which makes her dress look whiter. Now she twirls her leg—and see how proudly she stands on her stem. It is just like seeing myself—just like myself."

" What do I care about that ? " said Gerda. " You had no need to tell me this stuff." And she ran to the further end of the garden.

The gates were shut ; but she pressed upon the rusty latch, and it gave way.

The gates flew open, and little Gerda ran forth, with bare feet, into the wide world. She looked back thrice, but nobody was pursuing her. At last she could run no longer, and sat down upon a large stone, and, on looking round her, found that summer was over, and autumn already far advanced ; which she had been unable to perceive in the beautiful garden, where there were flowers and sunshine all the year round.

“ Dear me ! how long I have stayed ! ” said little Gerda. “ It is now autumn ; I must not dally ” ; and she rose to go further.

Oh, how tired and sore were her poor little feet ! And everything around looked so bleak and so cheerless. The long willow-leaves were quite yellow, and dew trickled down like water. One leaf kept falling after another, and the sloe-tree alone still bore fruit, only it was so sour that one could not eat it without making wry faces. Oh, how grey and how dreary seemed the whole world !

STORY THE FOURTH—



THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS

GERDA was obliged to rest again, when a large crow hopped through the snow, right opposite the place where she was sitting ; and, after looking at her a long while, and wagging his head, said : “Caw ! caw ! goo’ day, goo’ day !” He could not speak any plainer, but he meant kindly towards the little girl, and asked whither she was going, all alone in the wide world ?

Gerda understood perfectly the word “alone,” and knew its full import ; so she told the crow her whole story, and asked him if he had seen Kay.

The crow nodded his head thoughtfully, and said, “May be—may be.”

“No—have you though ?” cried the little girl, and had nearly hugged the crow to death, so fondly did she kiss him.

“Steady, steady,” said the crow ; “I think—I know—I believe—it may be little Kay ; but he has certainly forgotten you by this time for the princess.”

“Is he living at a princess’s ?” asked Gerda.

“Yes ; listen,” said the crow : “only I find it so hard to speak your language. If you understand

crows' language,¹ then I shall be able to tell you better."

"No, I never learned it," said Gerda; "but my grandmother knows it, and she could speak it too. I wish I had learned it."



'No—have you though?' cried the little girl, and had nearly hugged the crow to death, so fondly did she kiss him."

"Never mind," said the crow; "I'll tell it as well as I can, though I can't tell it properly." And then he told what he knew.

"In the kingdom where we now are lives a princess, who is desperately clever; it is true she has read and forgotten all the newspapers that exist in the world, so learned is she.

Lately, as she was sitting on the throne—which, people say, is not so very agreeable either—she began to sing a song which ran thus:—

¹ "Crows' language" is a jocose term for a kind of gibberish in use amongst children, and produced by the addition of syllables and letters to each word.

‘Wherefore shouldn’t I marry?’

‘Why not, indeed?’ added she; and then she determined to marry; only she wished to find a husband who knew how to answer when he was spoken to, and not one who could merely stand and look grand, because that is so tiresome. So she assembled all her ladies-in-waiting by the beat of a drum; and when they heard of her intention, they were much pleased. ‘We are glad of it,’ said they; ‘we had thought of it lately ourselves.’ You may believe every word I utter,” continued the crow; “for I have a tame sweetheart who hops about the palace, and told me all that passed.”

Of course his sweetheart was a crow, for like seeks like, and a crow is sure to choose a crow.

“The newspapers immediately sported a border of hearts with the princess’s initials, and proclaimed that every good-looking young man was at liberty to go to the palace, and speak to the princess; and he who could say anything worth hearing would be welcome to the run of the palace; while he who spoke the best would be chosen as a husband for the princess. Yes, yes,” continued the crow, “you may believe me: it is every word as true as that I’m sitting here. The people all crowded helter-skelter to the palace, and there was such crushing and pushing; but nobody succeeded either the first or the second day. They could all speak well enough while they were outside in



“ She began to sing a song which ran thus :— ‘ Wherefore shouldn’t
I marry ? ’ ”

the street, but when they had passed through the palace gate, and came to behold the bodyguards in silver and the lackeys all over gold, standing along the staircase, and the large rooms so finely lighted up, they were quite confounded. And when they approached the throne where sat the princess, they found nothing to say, and could only repeat the last word that she uttered, which she had no mind to hear a second time. It was exactly as if the people inside had taken snuff into their stomachs and had fallen asleep till they came back into the street and recovered their speech. There was a whole row of them, reaching from the town gate to the palace. I went myself to see them," added the crow. "They were hungry and thirsty, but they did not get as much as a glass of water in the palace. Some of the wisest had, to be sure, taken slices of bread-and-butter with them; but they did not share them with their next neighbour: for each thought, 'Let him look hungry, and then the princess won't have him.'"

"But tell me about Kay—little Kay," said Gerda. "When did he come?—and was he amongst the crowd?"

"Stop a bit, we are coming to him presently. On the third day, there came marching cheerfully along towards the palace a little body, who had neither horse nor coach; his eyes sparkled like yours, and he had beautiful long hair, but was shabbily dressed."

"That was Kay!" cried Gerda, in high delight. "Oh, then I have found him now!" and she clapped her hands for joy.

"He had a little knapsack on his back," said the crow.

"No—it must have been his sledge," said Gerda; "for he went away with his sledge."

"That may be," said the crow; "I was not so particular about it. But this I know from my tame sweetheart, that when he came through the palace gate, and saw the bodyguards all over silver and the lackeys on the stairs all bedizened with gold, he was not the least flustered, but nodded to them, saying: 'It must be very tiresome to stand on the staircase; I prefer going in.' And the rooms were in a blaze of light; privy councillors and excellencies were walking about on their bare feet, and carrying golden vases: it was enough to inspire one with profound respect. His boots creaked so dreadfully loud; but he did not care a fig about that."

"It must be Kay," said Gerda; "I know he had new boots on: I have heard them creak in grandmother's room."

"Yes, they did creak, indeed!" said the crow. "But he went up boldly to the princess, who was sitting on a huge pearl as large as a spinning-wheel; and all the court ladies with their maids, and their maids' maids, and all the lords with their gentlemen, and their gentlemen's gentlemen, who each



"And when they approached the throne where sat the princess, they found nothing to say."

had a page to attend them, stood all around ; and the nearer they stood to the door the prouder they looked. Indeed, one could hardly venture to look at a gentleman's gentleman's page, who always wears slippers, so important an air did each assume as he stood in the doorway."

"It must be quite awful!" said little Gerda ;
"but did Kay obtain the princess?"

"If I had not been a crow, I would have taken her myself, although I am engaged. He spoke just as well as I do, when I am speaking the crows' language—so I heard from my tame sweetheart. He was cheerful and pleasant ; he had not come to woo her, but to see how clever the princess might be : and he was pleased with her, and she with him."

"To be sure, it must be Kay!" said Gerda.
"He was so clever ; he could reckon by heart even fractions. Oh ! will you not take me to the palace?"

"That is easily said," answered the crow ;
"but how can we manage it ? I will, however, speak to my tame sweetheart about it, and she will give us some advice ; for I must tell you candidly, a little girl of your sort would never obtain leave to enter the palace."

"Yes, I shall," said Gerda. "When Kay hears that I am there, he will immediately come out to fetch me in."

"Wait for me there, near yonder trellis,"

said the crow, wagging his head as he flew away.

It was not till late in the evening that the crow returned. "Caw! caw!" said he. "She sends her love to you, and here is a little roll which she took in the kitchen on purpose for you. There is bread enough there, and you must be very hungry. It is not possible for you to enter the palace, as you are barefooted: the guards in silver and the footmen in gold would not allow you to pass. But don't cry. We shall manage to get you in. My sweetheart knows a small back-staircase that leads to the bedroom, and she knows where she can find the key."

And they went through the long alley in the garden, where the leaves were falling one after the other; and when the lights in the palace were extinguished one after another, the crow led little Gerda to a back door, that was only fastened with a latch.

Oh, how Gerda's heart beat with anxious longing! She felt as if about to do something wrong; yet she only wanted to know whether it was little Kay. "It must be he," thought she, as she pictured to herself his intelligent eyes and his long hair, and fancied she saw him smile as he did formerly, when they used to sit under the roses at home. He would surely be glad to see her, to hear what a long way she had come for his sake, and to know how afflicted they all were at home

when he did not come back. - Oh, how her heart was thrilled with fear and joy !

They were now on the stairs, where a small lamp was burning in a closet. In the middle of the floor stood the tame crow, twisting her head in all directions as she gazed at Gerda, who curtsied, as her grandmother had taught her to do.

"My betrothed has spoken highly of you, my little missy," said the tame crow, "and your story is extremely touching. If you will take the lamp, I will walk before. We will go straight along this way, and then we shall meet no one."

"Somebody seems to be behind us," said Gerda, as a rustling noise went past her, and horses with flying manes and thin legs, whippers-in, and ladies and gentlemen on horseback, all appeared as shadows on the wall. Gerda.

"They are only dreams," said the crow, "heart come and fetch royalty's thoughts to go a-ho the ing. So much the better, as you can look at them in their beds all the more safely. But I hope when you rise to high honours, you will show a grateful heart."

"Of course," said the crow from the woods.

They now entered the first room, that was hung with rose-coloured satin, ornamented with artificial flowers, and where the dreams were already rushing past them ; only they went so fast that Gerda could not manage to see the royal personages. Each room was more magnificent than the last—



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"And he was pleased with her, and she with him."

it was enough to bewilder one. Now they reached a bedroom. The ceiling was like a large palm tree, with glass leaves of the most costly crystal ; and in the middle of the floor two beds, each resembling a lily, hung from a golden stem ; the one in which the princess lay was white, the other was red, and it was in the latter that Gerda went to seek for little Kay. She pushed one of the red leaves aside, and perceived a brown neck, Oh, that must be Kay ! She called out his name aloud, and held the lamp over him—the dreams again rushed into the chamber on horseback—he woke, turned his head round, and showed that he was not little Kay.

The prince's neck alone resembled his ; still, he was young and pretty. Then the princess peeped



" Gazed at Gerda, who curtsied."

out of the white lily, and asked what was the matter, when little Gerda began to cry, and related her whole story, and all that the crows had done to help her.

" Poor child ! " said the prince and princess, praising the crows, and

assuring them they were not angry with them, though they were not to make a practice of doing such things, and that they should even be rewarded.

"Would you like to have your freedom given you?" asked the princess, "or would you prefer being appointed court crows, and having for your perquisites all the leavings in the kitchen?"

The two crows bowed, and begged leave to have the fixed appointment, for they thought



"Horses with flying manes . . . appeared like shadows on the wall."

of their old age, and said it would be so comfortable to have a certain provision for their old days, as they called it.

And the prince got out of his bed to give it up to Gerda, and more he could scarcely do. She folded her little hands and thought, "How kind are both human beings and animals!" And then she closed her eyes, and fell into a sweet sleep. All the dreams came flying back into the chamber,

looking like angels, and drawing in a little sledge, in which sat Kay, who nodded to her. But it was only a dream, so, of course, it vanished the moment she woke.

On the following day she was dressed in silk



"The coach was amply stored inside with sweet cakes, and under the seat were fruit and gingerbread-nuts."

and velvet from head to foot, and they offered to let her stop in the palace and enjoy a good time of it ; but all she asked for was a little coach and a horse, and a pair of little boots, that she might go into the wide world to look for Kay.

And she not only obtained boots, but a muff ; she was elegantly dressed, and on going away she found waiting at the door a new coach of pure gold with coachman, footmen, and postillions, wearing gold crowns on their heads. The prince and princess themselves helped her into the coach, and wished her every happiness. The wild crow, who was now married, accompanied her for the first three miles, and sat by her side, for he could not bear riding backwards ; the tame crow stood in the doorway, flapping her wings, but went no further, because she had been suffering from headache ever since she had had a fixed appointment, and too much to eat. The coach was amply stored inside with sweet cakes, and under the seat were fruit and gingerbread-nuts.

“ Farewell ! farewell ! ” cried the prince and princess, and little Gerda wept, and the crow wept. And then after the first few miles the wild crow took leave of her likewise ; and his was the saddest leave-taking of all : he perched upon a tree, and flapped his black wings as long as he could see the coach glancing in the bright sunshine.

STORY THE FIFTH—THE LITTLE ROBBER-GIRL



HEY now drove through a gloomy forest ; but the coach lit up the way like a torch, and glared in the eyes of some robbers, who could not withstand such a light.

“It is gold ! it is gold !” said they, rushing forward ; and seizing hold of the horses, they struck the little jockeys, the coachman and footmen, dead, and dragged little Gerda out of the coach.

“She is fat and nice, and fed with the kernels of nuts,” said the old robber woman, who had a long bristly beard, and eyebrows that overshadowed her eyes. “It’s as good as a little fat lamb—how nice it will taste !” So saying, she drew forth a shining knife, and most frightfully did it glitter.

“Oh, la !” screamed the woman, whose ear was bitten at that very moment by her own daughter, a froward, naughty girl, who was hanging on her back. “You ugly thing !” said the mother, forgetting to kill Gerda.

“She shall play with me,” said the little robber-girl. “She shall give me her muff and her pretty dress, and sleep with me in my bed.” And she bit her mother again till she leaped into the air,

and twirled round again. And all the robbers laughed, saying, "See how she is dancing with her cub!"

"I will take a ride in the coach," said the little robber-girl. And she must, and would, have her way, she was so ill-bred and obstinate. She and Gerda then got in, and away they went into the depths of the wood. The little robber-girl was as big as Gerda, but stronger, with broader shoulders and a darker skin; her eyes were quite black, and she looked almost melancholy. She took little Gerda round the waist, and said: "They shan't kill you, as long as I don't wish you ill. I suppose you are a princess?"

"No," said Gerda, relating her whole history, and how fond she was of little Kay.

The robber-girl looked at her earnestly, and, slightly nodding her head, she said, "They shan't kill you, even if I should wish you ill; for then I'd do it myself." And then she dried Gerda's eyes, and put both her hands into the handsome muff, that was so soft and so warm.

The coach now stopped. They were in the middle of a courtyard belonging to a robber's castle, that was full of crevices from top to bottom. Crows and ravens flew out of the open holes, and great bulldogs, every one of which looked as though it could swallow a whole man, were jumping about, though they did not bark, because it was not allowed.

In a large, old, smoky hall a bright fire was burning on the stone floor. The smoke went up to the ceiling, and found an outlet as best it might. Soup was boiling in a large cauldron, and hares and rabbits were roasting on spits.

"You shall sleep to-night with me and all my little animals," said the robber-girl. They then had something to eat and drink given them ; after which they went into a corner, where straw and carpets were laid on the floor. Upwards of a hundred doves were perched on laths and poles, and were apparently asleep, though they turned round slightly when the two little girls approached.

"They all belong to me," said the little robber-girl ; and seizing hold of the one nearest to her, she held it by the feet, and shook it till it flapped its wings. "Kiss it !" cried she, flapping it into Gerda's face. "There sits a rabble of wild doves," continued she, pointing behind a number of staves that were fixed in front of a hole high up in the wall. "Those two are a couple of rascally wild doves, who would fly away directly if they were not kept locked up. And here stands my dear old ba-a !" So saying, she took by the horn a reindeer who wore a bright brass collar round his neck, and was tied up. "We must keep him pretty tightly too, or else he would give us the slip. I tickle his neck every evening with my sharp knife, which he is vastly afraid of." And the little girl took out a long knife from a cleft in the wall, and drew it

slightly across the reindeer's neck. The poor animal began to kick, and the little robber-girl laughed, and then drew little Gerda into bed with her.

"Do you mean to keep the knife with you when you are asleep?" asked Gerda, looking at it with some alarm.

"I always sleep with the knife," said the little robber-girl. "One never knows what may happen. But tell me now over again all that you told me about Kay, and why you went out into the wide world."

And Gerda related what she had told before, while the wild doves kept cooing in their cage above, and the other doves slept. The little robber-girl put her arm round Gerda's neck, and held the knife in her other hand, and snored aloud; but Gerda could not close her eyes, not knowing whether she was to live or to be put to death. The robbers sat round the fire, singing and drinking, and the robber woman became quite tipsy. Oh! it was shocking for the little girl to witness such a scene!

Then the wild doves said: "Coo! coo! we have seen little Kay. A white fowl carried his sledge. He sat in the Snow Queen's carriage, which drove right over the forest as we lay in our nests. She blew upon us young ones, who all died except our two selves. Coo! coo!"

"What are you saying up there?" cried Gerda,

"Where was the Snow Queen going? Do you know anything about it?"

"She was probably going to Lapland, where there is always snow and ice. Ask the reindeer that is fastened to a rope."

"Yes, there is ice and snow, and a delightful place it is," said the reindeer "There one can



"By that time they had reached Lapland."

leap about in freedom in the large glittering valleys, and there the Snow Queen pitches her summer tent; but her stronghold lies near the North Pole, on an island called Spitzbergen."

"Oh, Kay! little Kay!" sighed Gerda.

"Lie still," said the robber-girl, "or I'll run the knife through your body!"

Next morning Gerda told her all that the wild doves had said, when the little robber-girl looked serious, though she nodded her head, saying : "That's no matter ! that's no matter ! Do you know where Lapland lies ?" asked she of the reindeer.

"Who can know better than I ?" said the animal, while his eyes sparkled. "I was born and brought up there, and I have frisked about on its snow-fields."

"Hark !" said the robber-girl to Gerda ; "you see that all our men are gone, and only mother remains at home : but towards noon she drinks out of a large bottle, and takes a little nap afterwards, and then I'll do something for you." She now jumped out of bed, took her mother by the neck, pulled her beard, and said, "My own dear mammy ! good-morning to you !"

The mother, in return, filliped her nose till it was red and blue ; and all this was out of love.

When the mother had drunk freely out of her bottle, and had gone off to sleep, the robber-girl went to the reindeer, and said : "I should like vastly to tickle you many times more with the sharp knife, for then you make yourself so ridiculous ; but never mind, I will untie your rope and help you out, that you may run off to Lapland. But you must put your best leg foremost, to carry this little girl to the Snow Queen's palace, where she will find her playfellow. You have heard all she

told, for she spoke loud enough, and you were listening."

The reindeer jumped for joy. The robber-girl lifted little Gerda on to the animal, and took the precaution to bind her fast, and even to give her a little cushion to sit upon.

"And there are your fur boots," said she, "for it is getting cold ; but as to the muff, I shall keep that, it is so pretty. Yet you shan't be frozen by the cold, either ; here are my mother's large mittens, which will reach to your elbows. Creep into them. Now your hands look just like my mother's."

And Gerda wept for joy.

"I don't like to see you whimpering," said the little robber-girl ; "you ought now to look pleased. Here are a couple of loaves and a ham, so now you won't starve." These were fastened to the reindeer, and then the little robber-girl opened the doors, enticed all the dogs into the house, and, lastly, cut the rope that bound the reindeer with her sharp knife, saying to him, "Now, run away ; but take good care of the little girl."

And Gerda stretched forth her hands, in the large mittens, towards the robber-girl, and bid her farewell, and then away the reindeer flew, through thick and thin, across the wide forest, over bogs and steppes, as quick as he could fly. The wolves howled and ravens screeched. "Fizz! fizz!" said the sky, as if it were sneezing red.

"There's my old friend the aurora borealis!" cried the reindeer; "see how it shines!" And he ran still faster, both day and night. The loaves were eaten, and the ham too, and by that time they had reached Lapland.

STORY THE SIXTH—THE LAPLANDER AND THE
FINLANDER



THEY stopped in front of a miserable-looking little house, whose roof reached down to the ground, and whose door was so low that the family were obliged to creep on all-fours when they wanted to go out or in. Nobody was at home just then but an old Laplandish woman, who was cooking fish by the light of a train-oil lamp, and the reindeer told her Gerda's whole story, after having first told his own—which seemed to him far the more important of the two; and Gerda was so benumbed with the cold that she could not speak a word.

"Why you poor creatures," said the Laplander, "you have still a long way to go. You must go a hundred miles into Finland; for it is there the Snow Queen lives in the summer, and burns

Bengal lights every evening. I will write a few words on a dried stock-fish, for I have no paper, and give it you for the Finlandish woman up there, and she will direct you better than I can."

And when Gerda was warmed, and had eaten and drunk, the Laplandish woman wrote a few words on a dried stock-fish, and, telling Gerda to take good care of it, tied her once more upon the reindeer, who made off with great speed.

"Fizz! fizz!" said the air, and during the whole night there shone the prettiest blue aurora borealis. And then they reached Finland, and knocked at the chimney of the Finlandish woman, for door she had none.

It was so terribly hot within that their hostess had scarcely any clothes on her back. She was small and dirty-looking. She immediately loosened little Gerda's dress, and took off her mittens and boots, or else she would have been oppressed by the heat, and put a lump of ice on the reindeer's head, and then read what was written on the stock-fish. After perusing it three times she knew its contents by heart, and then put the stock-fish into the saucepan where the broth was cooking, as it was fit to be eaten, and she never wasted anything.

The reindeer now related first his own story and then little Gerda's, and the Finlandish woman's intelligent eyes twinkled, though she said nothing.

"As you are so wise," said the reindeer, "that you can bind all the winds in the world with a bit of thread, so that if a seaman loosens one knot it will bring him a fair wind, and if he loosens another there will blow a stiff gale, and by untying a third and fourth he could raise a hurricane that would overthrow forests—cannot you give this little girl a potion to endow her with the power of twelve men, so that she should conquer the Snow Queen?"

"The power of twelve men!" said the Finlandish woman; "that would be of much use, indeed!" and then she went to a shelf, and took down a large skin roll, which she unfurled, and upon which she read strange characters, till the perspiration trickled down from her forehead.

But the reindeer begged so hard for little Gerda, and she looked at the Finlandish woman with such tearful and entreating eyes, that the eyes of the latter began to twinkle, and taking the reindeer into a corner she whispered into his ear, as she laid a fresh lump of ice on his head—



"The Finlandish woman's intelligent eyes twinkled, though she said nothing."

"Little Kay is sure enough with the Snow Queen, and finds everything in her palace so much to his taste and his liking that he thinks it the finest place in the world ; but this comes of his having a glass fragment in his heart and a little speck of glass in his eye. They must be removed, or else he'll never be a human being again, and the Snow Queen will retain her power over him."

"But can't you give little Gerda something that shall endow her with power over all these things ?"

"I can't give her any greater power than she already possesses ; do you not see how great it already is ? Do you not see how men and animals must serve her, and how she has come on in the world with bare feet ? She can't receive any power from us ; its seat is in her heart, and consists in her being such a dear, innocent child as she is. If she can't gain access to the Snow Queen by her own means, and remove the glass shivers out of little Kay, we can do nothing to bring about such a result. The Snow Queen's garden begins two miles from hence. You can carry the little girl thither, and set her down near the large bush, which stands covered with red berries amidst the snow. Don't stay gossiping, but make haste and come back hither." And then the Finlandish woman lifted little Gerda on to the reindeer's back, who ran off as fast as he could.

"Oh, I have forgotten my boots and my mittens !" cried little Gerda the moment she was in the biting

cold, yet she dared not stop the reindeer, who ran till he reached the bush with the red berries, where he set down Gerda and kissed her mouth, while large, bright tears trickled down the animal's cheeks, and away he ran back. There stood poor Gerda without shoes or gloves in the middle of dreary, icy cold Finland.

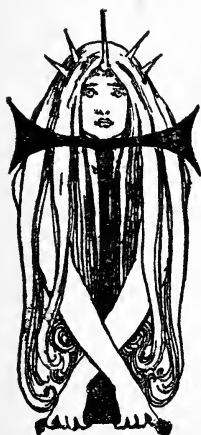
She ran forwards as quick as she could, when she was met by a whole regiment of snow-flakes ; which did not, however, fall from the sky, that was bright and lit up by an aurora borealis, but ran along the ground, and grew bigger the nearer they approached. Gerda remembered how large and artfully-fashioned snow-flakes looked when she saw them through a burning-glass. But here they were far larger and more alarming, for they were alive ; they were the Snow Queen's outguards, and were of the oddest shapes. Some looked like ugly, large porcupines ; others like a knot of serpents, with their heads poking out ; others again like thick little bears, with bristling hairs. All were dazzlingly white, and all were living snow-flakes.

Little Gerda then repeated the Lord's Prayer, while the cold was so intense that she could see her own breath, which came out of her mouth like so much smoke. These clouds of breath became thicker, and took the shape of little angels, who grew larger the moment they touched the earth ; and all wore helmets on their heads, and carried spears and shields in their hands. Their numbers

kept increasing, and by the time Gerda had finished her prayer a whole legion of them surrounded her, and they pierced the frightful snowflakes with their spears till they shivered them into a hundred pieces, and little Gerda went on in safety and in good spirits. The angels stroked her hands and feet, so that she felt the cold less, and hastened on to the Snow Queen's castle. But now we must see what Kay is after. In truth he was not thinking of little Gerda at all, much less of her being outside the castle at that very moment.

STORY THE SEVENTH—

OF THE SNOW QUEEN'S CASTLE, AND WHAT TOOK PLACE IN IT LATER



HE walls of the castle were made of drifted snow; and the windows and doors were made of biting winds. There were above a hundred rooms in it, just as the snow had blown them together; the largest was several miles long. They were all lit up by the vivid aurora borealis, and they were so

large, so empty, so icy cold, and so glittering ! No festivities were ever held there ; not so much as a little ball for bears, to which the tempest might have played tunes, and where the bears might have danced on their hind legs and shown their good breeding ; nor even a game of hot cockles, nor a gossiping coffee party for white fox spinsters ; the Snow Queen's halls were empty, cold, and dreary. The aurora borealis shone so plainly throughout the castle that one could reckon when it stood at the highest or the lowest point in the heavens. In the middle of this empty and endless snow-hall lay a frozen lake, that was broken into a thousand pieces, only each piece was so like the other that it formed a complete work of art ; and in the centre of the lake sat the Snow Queen, when she was at home, and then she said she was sitting on the mirror of reason, which was the best and only one in the world.

Little Kay was quite blue, nay, almost black with cold ; but he did not perceive it, for she had kissed away his shivering feelings, and his heart was like a lump of ice. He was dragging about some sharp, flat pieces of ice, and placing them in all manner of ways, for he wanted to make something out of them. It was just as when we make use of little wooden squares and triangles to compose figures, which we call a Chinese puzzle. Kay, too, was making figures, and very clever ones. This was the ice-game of reason. In his

eyes the figures were very remarkable, and of the highest importance—owing to the little glass shiver that still stuck in his eye. He composed complete figures that formed a written word, but he never could manage to form the word he wanted, which was “Eternity.” And the Snow Queen had said, “If you can find out this figure you shall then be your own master, and I’ll give you the whole world, besides a new pair of skates.” But he could not accomplish it.

“Now I will rush off to warm lands,” said the Snow Queen; “I will go and look into the black pipkins.” It was the volcanoes Etna and Vesuvius that she designated in this manner. “I will whiten them a bit! It will be good for them and benefit the lemons and grapes.” And away the Snow Queen flew, and Kay remained all alone in the large ice-hall that was so many miles long, and kept looking at the pieces of ice, and thinking and thinking till his head was ready to split; and he sat so stiff and so motionless that one might have thought he was frozen.

Just then it happened that little Gerda came through the large gate into the castle. Cutting winds were raging within, but she said an evening prayer, and the winds abated as if they were going to sleep; and she entered the large, empty, cold rooms, and there she beheld Kay. She immediately recognized him, and flew to embrace him, and held him fast while she ex-

claimed, "Kay! dear little Kay! So I have found you at last."

But he sat quite motionless, stiff, and cold; and then little Gerda shed warm tears that fell upon his breast, and penetrated to his heart, and melted the lump of ice, and washed away the little glass fragment at the same time. He looked at her while she sang—

"The roses bloom but one short hour, then die,
But th' infant Jesus ever lives on high."

Then Kay burst into tears, and he cried so abundantly that the little bit of glass swam out of his eye when he recognized her, and exclaimed joyously, "Gerda! dear little Gerda! Where have you stayed away so long? And where have I been?" And he looked all about him. "How cold it is here! How large and empty it all seems!" And he clung to Gerda, who laughed



"But he sat quite motionless, stiff
and cold."

and cried for joy; and the scene was so moving that even the pieces of ice jumped about for joy:

and when they were tired and lay down again, they formed themselves into the very letters the Snow Queen had said he must find out before he could become his own master, and she would make him a present of the whole world and a pair of new skates.

Then Gerda kissed his cheeks, and the bloom returned to them ; she kissed his eyes, and they beamed like hers ; she kissed his hands and feet, and he became healthy and cheerful. The Snow Queen might now come home if she pleased, for there stood his letters-patent of freedom, written in glittering pieces of ice.

And they took each other by the hand, and walked out of the castle, and talked of grandmamma and of the roses on the roof ; and wherever they went the winds were laid to rest, and the sun shone forth. And when they reached the bush with red berries they found the reindeer waiting for them, accompanied by a younger reindeer, whose udders were full of warm milk, which she gave the children to drink, and then kissed their mouths. They then carried Kay and Gerda to the Finlandish woman, where they warmed themselves thoroughly in the hot room, and obtained directions about their journey homewards, and next to the Laplandish woman, who had made new clothes for them and set their sledge in order.

The reindeer and his companion ran beside them, and followed them to the frontiers of the

land, where the first green shoots were to be seen ; and here the little travellers took leave of the reindeer and of their Laplandish hostess. "Farewell !" was said on all sides. And the first little birds began to twitter, and the forest was full of green buds ; and there emerged from it a beautiful horse (that Gerda recognized as having belonged to the golden coach), mounted by a girl wearing a shining red cap, and with pistols in her belt. This was the little robber-girl, who was tired of staying at home and was going first to the north, and then, if that did not suit her, to some other part of the world. She and Gerda instantly recognized each other, and delighted they were to meet.

"You are a pretty fellow to have gone a-gadding in such a manner," said she to little Kay ; "I wonder whether you deserve that anybody should have taken the trouble to run to the world's end for your sake."

But Gerda patted her cheeks, and asked after the prince and princess.

"They are travelling in foreign lands," said the robber-girl.

"And what is become of the crow ?" said Gerda.

"He is dead," returned she. "His tame sweetheart is become a widow, and wears a bit of black woollen thread round her leg. She makes great lamentations. but it's all mere stuff. But

now tell me how you fared, and how you managed to get him back."

Then Gerda and Kay related all that had taken place. "Snip-snap-snorum!" said the robber-girl, who shook their hands and promised, should she ever pass through their town, that she would pay them a visit, and then she rode forth into the wide world. Meantime, Kay and Gerda walked on hand in hand, and the farther they went the lovelier the spring appeared with its flowers and verdure; the church bells were ringing, and they recognized the tall steeples and the large town where they lived; and they entered it, and found their way to their grandmother's door, then up the stairs and into the room, where all looked the same as it used to do. The clock was still going "tick-tack!" and the hands were pointing to the hour; but, as they passed through the doorway, they perceived they were now grown-up. The roses on the roof were in full bloom and peeping in at the open window; and there stood their little chairs which they used as children, upon which Kay and Gerda now sat down, each on their own, holding each other by the hand, while the cold, empty splendour of the Snow Queen's palace vanished from their thoughts like a painful dream. The grandmother sat in God's bright sunshine, reading aloud the following passage in the Bible: "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

And Kay and Gerda exchanged looks, and they now understood the meaning of the old hymn :—

“The roses bloom but one short hour, then die,
But th’ infant Jesus ever lives on high.”

And there they both sat—grown-up, yet children still, for they were children in their hearts ; and it was summer—warm, glorious summer !

The Little Match-Girl



It was dreadfully cold, it snowed, and was getting quite dark, for it was evening — yes, the last evening of the year.

Amid the cold and the darkness, a little girl, with bare head and naked feet, was roaming through the streets. It is true she had on a pair of slippers when she left home, but that was not of much use, for they were very large slippers; so large, indeed, that they had hitherto been used by her mother; besides, the little creature lost them as she hurried across the street, to avoid two carriages,

that were driving at a fearful rate. One of the slippers was not to be found, and the other was pounced upon by a boy, who ran away with it, saying that it would serve for a cradle when he should have children of his own.

So the little girl went along, with her little bare feet, that were red and blue with cold. She carried a number of matches in an old apron, and she held a bundle of them in her hand. Nobody had bought anything of her the whole livelong day, and nobody had even given her a penny.

She crept along, shivering with cold and hunger, a perfect picture of misery—poor little thing !

The snow-flakes covered her long flaxen hair, which hung in pretty curls round her throat ; but she heeded them not.

Lights were streaming from all the windows, and there was a savoury smell of roast goose ; for it was St. Sylvester's evening. And this she did heed.

She now sat down, cowering in a corner formed by two houses, one of which projected beyond the other. She had drawn her little feet under her, but she felt colder than ever ; yet she dared not return home, for she had not sold a match, and could not bring back a penny.

Her father would certainly beat her ; and it was cold enough at home, besides—for they had only the roof above them, and the wind came howling through it, though the largest holes had been

stopped with straw and rags. Her little hands were nearly frozen with cold.

Alas ! a single match might do her some good, if she might only draw one out of the bundle, and rub it against the wall, and warm her fingers.

So at last she drew one out. Whisht ! how it shed sparks, and how it burned ! It gave out a warm, bright flame, like a little candle, as she held her hands over it—truly, it was a wonderful little light ! It really seemed to the little girl as



“ She now sat down, cowering in a corner. She had drawn her little feet under her, but felt colder than ever.”

if she were sitting before a large iron stove, with polished brass feet, and brass shovel and tongs. The fire burned so blessedly, and warmed so nicely, that the little creature stretched out her feet to

warm them likewise, when lo ! the flame expired, the stove vanished, and left nothing but the little half-burned match in her hand.

She rubbed another match against the wall. It gave a light, and where it shone upon the wall the latter became as transparent as a veil, and she could see into the room.

A snow-white tablecloth was spread upon the table on which stood a splendid china dinner service, while a roast goose, stuffed with apples and prunes, sent forth the most savoury odour. And what was more delightful still, the goose jumped down from the dish, and waddled along the ground with a knife and fork in its breast, up to the poor girl.

The match then went out, and nothing remained but the thick, damp wall.

She lit another match.

She now sat under the most magnificent Christmas tree, that was larger, and more superbly decked, than even the one she had seen through the glass door at the rich merchant's. A thousand tapers burned on its green branches, and gay pictures, such as one sees on targets, seemed to be looking down upon her. The match then went out.

The Christmas lights kept rising higher and higher. They now looked like stars in the sky. One of them fell down, and left a long streak of fire.

"Somebody is now dying," thought the little

ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES

girl—for her old grandmother, the only person who had ever loved her, and who was now dead, had told her, that when a star falls, it is a sign that a soul is going up to heaven.

She again rubbed a match upon the wall, and it was again light all round ; and in the brightness stood her old grandmother, clear and shining like a spirit, yet looking so mild and loving.

“Grandmother,” cried the little one, “oh ! take me with you ! I know you will go away when the match goes out—you will vanish like the warm stove, and the delicious roast goose, and the fine, large Christmas-tree ? ”

And she made haste to rub the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to hold her grandmother fast.

And the matches gave a light that was brighter than noonday. Her grandmother had never appeared so beautiful nor so large. She took the little girl in her arms, and both flew upwards, all radiant and joyful, far—far above mortal ken—where there was neither cold, nor hunger, nor care to be found ; for it was to the land of the blessed that they had flown.

But, in the cold dawn, the poor girl might be seen leaning against the wall, with red cheeks and smiling mouth : she had been frozen on the last night of the old year.

The new year's sun shone upon the little corpse.

The child sat in the stiffness of death, still

holding the matches, one bundle of which was burned.

People said : " She tried to warm herself."

Nobody dreamed of the fine things she had seen, nor in what splendour she had entered upon the joys of the new year, together with her grandmother.



he Real Princess

THERE was once a prince who wished to marry a princess ; but he wanted her to be a real princess.

He travelled all round the world to find such one, but there was always something wrong. Not that there was any lack of princesses, but as to whether or no they were real ones, he could not always make out.

There was sure to be something in

the way that was not quite satisfactory. At length he returned home, quite out of spirits, for he wished so to find a real princess.

One evening there was a dreadful storm. It thundered and lightened, and poured of rain, till it was quite dreadful. There came a knock at the town-gate, and the old king went and opened it.



"But she said nothing, and went into a spare room and laid a pea on the sacking of the bedstead."

A princess stood outside the gate—but, oh dear! what a state she was in from the rain and the bad weather! The water was dripping down from her hair and her clothes, and running in at



“‘I scarcely closed my eyes all night! I do not know what was
in the bed.’”

the tips of her shoes and coming out at the heels. Yet she said she was a real princess.

"Well, that we'll presently see," thought the old queen. But she said nothing, and went into a spare room, and took off all the bedding, and laid a pea on the sacking of the bedstead. She then took twenty mattresses and laid them upon the pea, and then piled twenty eider-down beds on the top of the mattresses.

The princess lay upon them the whole night. On the following morning she was asked how she had slept.

"Oh, most shockingly!" said the princess. "I scarcely closed my eyes all night! I do not know what was in the bed. I laid upon some hard substance, which has made me black and blue all over. It is quite dreadful!"

It was now evident that she was a real princess, since she perceived the pea through twenty mattresses and twenty eider-down beds. None but a real princess could have such delicate feeling.

So the prince married her, for he knew that he had now found a real princess; and the pea was preserved in the cabinet of curiosities, where it is still to be seen, unless somebody has stolen it.

And this, mind you, is a real story.

Little Claus and Big Claus



HERE once lived in a village two persons of the same name. Both were called Claus ; but one had four horses, while the other possessed only a single horse. In order, however, to distinguish them, the one that owned the four horses was styled Big Claus, while he who had but a single horse was called Little Claus. Now you shall hear how it fared with them both ; for this is a true story.

Little Claus was obliged to plough all the week for Big Claus, and to lend him his only horse , and then Big Claus helped him in turn with his four horses, but only once a week, and that was on Sundays. And proudly did Little Claus smack his whip over the five horses, for they were as good as his on that one day. The sun was shining brightly and all the bells were ringing for church,

as the people passed by in their holiday clothes and with their prayer-books under their arm, on their way to hear the preacher, when they saw Little Claus ploughing with five horses ; and he was so pleased, that he kept smacking the whip, and saying : “ Gee-ho, my five horses ! ”

“ You must not say so,” quoth Big Claus, “ for only one of them is yours.”

But no sooner did somebody go past, than Little Claus forgot he was not to say so, and he called out : “ Gee-ho, my five horses ! ”

“ Now, really, I wish you would hold your tongue,” said Big Claus ; “ for if you say that again, I’ll knock your horse on the head, so that he shall drop down dead on the spot ; and then there will be an end of him.”

“ I won’t say it again—indeed I won’t,” said Little Claus. But when some more people came past and nodded to him, and bade him good-morning, he was so pleased, and thought it looked so well for him to have five horses to plough his field, that he smacked the whip, and cried : “ Gee-ho, my five horses ! ”

“ I’ll gee-ho, your horse for you ! ” said Big Claus ; and snatching up a hammer, he knocked Little Claus’s only horse on the head, so that he dropped down quite dead.

“ Now I have no horse left,” said Little Claus, weeping. He afterwards took the horse’s skin off, dried it in the wind, and then put it into a bag,

which he slung upon his back, and went to a neighbouring town to sell it.

He had a long way to go, and was obliged to cross a thick, gloomy forest, where he was overtaken by a storm. He lost himself completely; and before he could find his way again, evening had already set in, and he was too far off either to reach the town or to go back home before it would be completely dark.

Near the road stood a large farm. The shutters were closed outside the windows, still the light shone through at the top. Little Claus thought he might, perhaps, obtain leave to spend the night under cover, so he went and knocked at the door.

The farmer's wife opened the door; but when she found what he wanted, she told him to go his ways, for her husband was not at home, and she could not take in strangers.

"Well, then, I must lie down outside," said Little Claus, as the farmer's wife slammed the door in his face.

Close by there stood a haystack, and between it and the house was a little shed, with a smooth, thatched roof.

"I can lie up there," thought Little Claus, on perceiving the roof, "and a capital bed it will make. I suppose the stork won't fly down to bite my legs." For a live stork was standing above on the roof, where he had built his nest.

Little Claus now crept up on the shed, where he laid down, and turned himself about in order to get a comfortable berth. The wooden shutters outside the windows did not reach to the top, so that he could see into the room.

There stood a large table loaded with wine,



"She was pouring him out wine, while he was busy with his fork in the fish."

roast meat, and excellent fish. The farmer's wife and the sexton were sitting at table all alone, and she was pouring him out wine, while he was busy with his fork in the fish, for it was his favourite dish.

"I should like to get a bit of that," thought Little Claus, stretching out his head close to the window. Goodness ! what nice pastry he did see, to be sure ! It was a regular feast.

He now heard some one riding towards the farmhouse, and this was the woman's husband coming home.

He was a very good sort of man, but he had an odd prejudice : namely, he could not bear the sight of a sexton ; and if he saw one, he fell into a rage. That was the reason why the sexton had gone to see his wife in his absence ; and the good woman had given him the best of everything she had to eat. But when she heard her husband coming she was frightened, and she begged the sexton to conceal himself in a large empty chest. This he did, for he knew the husband could not bear to see a sexton. The wife then hid the wine, and popped all the nice things into the oven ; for if her husband had seen them, he would, of course, have asked for whom they had been dished up.

" Oh, dear ! " sighed Little Claus, on his shed, when he saw all the eatables disappear.

" Is there any one above ? " asked the farmer, looking up at Little Claus. " Why are you lying there ? Come rather into the house with me."

Now Little Claus told him how he had got lost, and begged leave to spend the night at the farm.

“That you shall do,” said the farmer, “but we must first have something to eat.”

The woman welcomed them both in a friendly manner, and spread a long table, and gave them a large dish of gruel. The farmer was hungry, and ate with a good appetite; but Little Claus could not help thinking of the nice roast-meat, the fish, and the pastry, that he knew was hid in the oven.

He had laid the bag containing the horse's skin which he had set out to sell in the next town, under the table at his feet. He did not relish the gruel, so he trod on his bag, when the dried skin squeaked aloud.

“Hush!” said Little Claus to his bag, at the same time treading upon it again, when it squeaked much louder than before.

“Holloa! What's that you've got in your bag?” asked the farmer.

“Oh, it is a magician,” said Little Claus, “and he says we ought not to be eating gruel, when he has conjured the oven full of roast-meat, fish and wine.”

“Zounds!” said the farmer, hastily opening the oven, where he found all the nice, savoury viands which his wife had concealed in it, and which he believed the magician in the bag had conjured up for them. The wife did not say a word, but laid the things on the table; and they ate of the fish, the roast-meat, and the pastry. Little Claus

now trod again upon his bag, so that the skin squeaked.

"What says he now?" inquired the farmer.

"He says," answered Little Claus, "that he has conjured us three bottles of wine, which are standing in the corner, near the stove." So the woman was obliged to fetch out the wine she had hid, and the farmer drank, and was right merry. He would have liked vastly to have had such a magician as Little Claus carried about in his bag.

"Can he conjure up the Evil One?" inquired the farmer; "I should like to see him, now I'm in a merry mood."

"Yes," said Little Claus; "my magician will do anything that I please. Won't he?" asked he, treading on the bag till it squeaked. "You hear he answers 'Yes,' only the Evil One is so ugly that we would rather not see him."

"Oh, I'm not afraid. What will he look like?"

"He will look the living image of a sexton."

"Nay, that's ugly indeed!" said the farmer. "You must know I can't abide seeing a sexton. But never mind—as I shall know it is the Evil One, I shall bear the sight more easily. Now, I'm all courage! Only he must not come too near me."

"Now, I'll ask my conjurer," said Little Claus as he trod on the bag and stooped his ear.

"What does he say?"

"He says that you may go and open that chest in the corner, and you'll see the Evil One cowering inside it ; only you must hold the lid fast, so that he should not escape."

"Will you help me to hold it ?" asked the farmer ; and he went up to the chest into which his wife had put the sexton, and who was sitting inside in a great fright.

The farmer opened the lid a little, and peeped in. "Oh !" cried he, jumping backwards, "now I've seen him, and he is exactly like our sexton. It was a shocking sight !"

So thereupon he must needs drink again, and they drank on till the night was far advanced.

"You must sell me your conjurer," said the farmer ; "ask anything you like for him. Nay, I'll give you at once a whole bushelful of money."

"No, I can't indeed !" said Little Claus ; "only think of all the benefit I can derive from such a conjurer."

"But I should so like to have him," said the farmer, and continued entreating.

"Well," said Little Claus at length, "as you were so kind as to give me a night's shelter, I won't say nay. You shall have the conjurer for a bushel of money, only it must be full measure, mind you."

"You shall have it," said the farmer. "But you must take away the chest with you, for I wouldn't let it stay an hour longer in the house,

there's no knowing but what he may still be inside it."

Little Claus then gave the farmer his bag containing the dried skin, and received a bushel of money—full measure—in exchange. The farmer gave him a wheelbarrow into the bargain, to enable him to take away the chest and the bushel of money.

"Farewell!" said Little Claus, and away he went with his money, and the large chest containing the sexton.

At the other end of the forest was a broad, deep river, whose waters were so rapid that one could hardly swim against the tide. A new bridge had just been built over it. Little Claus now stopped in the middle of the bridge, and said, loud enough to be heard by the sexton—"What shall I do with this stupid chest? It is as heavy as if it were filled with a stone. I am tired of trundling it any further, so I'll throw it into the river; if it swims after me till I reach home, it's all well and good—if not, I don't care."

He then seized hold of the chest, and began to lift it up a little, as if he were going to throw it into the water.

"Leave it alone!" cried the sexton inside the chest; "let me out first."

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said Little Claus, pretending to be frightened; "he is still inside! I must make haste and fling him into the river, that he may get drowned!"

"Oh! no, no, no!" cried the sexton; "I'll give you a whole bushelful of money if you will set me free."

"That is something like!" said Little Claus, opening the chest. The sexton crept out, pushed the empty chest into the water, and went home, where he measured out a whole bushel of money for Little Claus. As he had already received one from the farmer, his wheelbarrow was now full of coins.

"I have been well paid for the horse, at all events," said he to himself, when he had reached home, and had shaken out all the money into a heap on the floor of his room. "It will vex Big Claus when he hears how rich I have become through my only horse; but I shan't tell him exactly how it all came about."

He now sent a lad to Big Claus to borrow a bushel.

"What can he want it for?" thought Big Claus, as he smeared the bottom of it with tar, that some particles of what was to be measured might stick to it. And sure enough this came to pass; for on receiving back the bushel, three new silver half-florins were adhering to the tar.

"How comes this?" said Big Claus; and running off to Little Claus, he inquired: "Where did you get so much money?"

"Oh! it was given me for my horse's skin, which I sold yesterday."



“ ‘What can he want it for?’ thought Big Claus, as he smeared the bottom of it with tar.”

"It is pretty handsomely paid for, seemingly," said Big Claus, who ran home, and seizing a hatchet, knocked his four horses on the head, and then took their skins to town to sell.

"Skins ! skins ! who'll buy skins ?" he cried through all the streets.

A number of shoemakers and tanners came and inquired what he asked for them.

"A bushel of money for each," said Big Claus.

"Are you crazy ?" cried they ; "do you think we measure money by the bushel ?"

"Skins ! skins ! who'll buy skins ?" cried he once more ; but to all who asked the price of them he answered : "A bushel of money."

"He means to make game of us," said they ; and the shoemakers took up their stirrups, and the tanners their leather aprons, and fell to belabouring Big Claus's shoulders. "Skins ! skins !" cried they, mocking him ; "I'll warrant we'll tan your skin for you till it is black and blue. Out of the town with him !" hooted they, and Big Claus ran as fast as he could, for he had never been beaten so thoroughly before.

"Little Claus shall pay me for this !" said he, on reaching home ; "I'll kill him for his pains."

Meantime Little Claus's old grandmother had died in his house. She had always been very cross and very unkind to him ; still he was sorry, and he put the dead body into his warm bed, to see if it would not bring her back to life. Here he

left her all night, while he sat in a corner, and slept in a chair, which he had often done before.

In the middle of the night, the door opened, and in came Big Claus with his hatchet. He knew the place where little Claus's bed stood, and therefore went right up to it, and knocked the old grandame on the head, thinking it must be Little Claus.

"There!" said he; "now you'll not play off any more of your tricks on me!" and he then went home.

"What a wicked man!" thought Little Claus. "He wanted to kill me. It was lucky for my old grandame that she was already dead, or he would have put an end to her life."

He now dressed his old grandmother in her holiday clothes, borrowed a horse of his neighbour, and harnessed it to his cart, and then placed the old grandame on the back seat, so that she should not fall out when he began to drive, and away they went through the forest. By sunrise they had reached a large inn, at which Little Claus stopped, and went in for some refreshment.

The landlord was a wealthy man, and he was a good one too; only as passionate as if he had been made of pepper and snuff.

"Good-morning!" said he to Little Claus; "you are stirring betimes to-day."

"Yes," said little Claus; "I'm going to town with my old grandmother. She's outside there, in the cart; for I can't well bring her in. Perhaps

you will take her a glass of mead. Only you must speak very loud, for she is hard of hearing."

"Yes, I will," said mine host, pouring out a large glassful of mead, which he carried to the dead grandame, who was sitting upright in the cart.

"Here's a glass of mead from your grandson," said the landlord; but the dead woman did not answer a word, and remained stock still.

"Don't you hear me?" said the landlord. "Here's a glass of mead from your grandson." This he bawled out a third time, and then a fourth; but as she did not stir, he flew into a passion, and flung the mead into her face, right across her nose, when she fell backwards over the cart; for she had only been set up, and not tied fast.

"Holloa!" cried Little Claus, rushing to the door, and seizing hold of the landlord; "you have killed my grandmother. Look! here's a great hole in her forehead!"

"What a misfortune!" exclaimed the landlord, wringing his hands. "This all comes of my hasty temper! My dear Little Claus! I'll give you a bushel of money, and I'll have your grandmother buried, as if she were my own, if you will but say nothing about what has happened; for else my head will be struck off, and that would be rather disagreeable, you know."

So Little Claus received a whole bushel of

money, and the landlord buried the old dame, as if she had been his own grandmother.

When Little Claus had once more reached home with his load of money, he immediately sent a lad to Big Claus to borrow a bushel of him.

"What's the meaning of this?" said Big Claus. "Haven't I struck him dead? I must look into the matter myself." And so he went over himself with the bushel to Little Claus's dwelling.

"Why, where did you get all that money?" asked he, in great astonishment on beholding the addition to his neighbour's wealth.

"You killed my grandmother instead of me," said Little Claus; "so I've sold her for a bushel of money."

"That's handsomely paid for, at all events!" quoth Big Claus; and hastening home, he seized his axe and killed his old grandmother at a blow; after which, he placed her in a cart, and drove to a town where an apothecary lived, and asked if he would purchase a dead body.

"Whose is it? and how did you come by it?" asked the apothecary.

"It is my grandmother's," said Big Claus! "I struck her dead to get a bushel of money in exchange."

"Lord help us!" said the apothecary; "you are out of your mind! Don't say such things, or your head will be in jeopardy." And he now dilated



"Seized his axe, and killed his old grandmother at a blow."

on the heinousness of the deed he had committed, and told him he was a most wicked man, and would assuredly he punished ; all of which frightened Big Claus to such a degree, that he ran out of the apothecary's shop, jumped into his cart, and drove home like mad. But as the apothecary, and everybody else, believed him to be beside himself, they let him go wherever he pleased.

" You shall pay me for this," said Big Claus, the moment he was on the high road—" that you shall, little Claus ! " And the moment he reached home, he took the largest bag he could find, and went to Little Claus, and said : " You have played me another trick : I first killed my horses, and now I've killed my old grandmother, and all through your fault ; but you shall never play me any more tricks." And he seized hold of Little Claus, and popped him into his bag, which he slung across his shoulder, saying : " Now, I'll go and drown you ! "

He had a long way to go before he reached the river, and Little Claus was none of the lightest to carry. On passing by the church, the organ was pealing forth, and the people were singing so beautifully ! So Big Claus set down his load beside the church-door, and thought he might as well go in and hear a psalm before he went any further. He felt certain Little Claus could not get out, and everybody was inside the church ; so in he went.

" Heigh-ho ! " sighed Little Claus, turning and twisting about in the bag, but without being able

to untie the string. An old grey-haired drover, with a large staff in his hand, chanced to come by : he was driving a flock of cows and bullocks, and as they pushed against the bag containing Little Claus, he was thrown down.

“ Heigh-ho ! ” sighed Little Claus ; “ I’m very young to be already bound for the kingdom of heaven ! ”

“ And I,” said the drover, “ who am so old, have not yet had the good luck to reach it.”

“ Open the bag,” cried Little Claus, “ and creep into it instead of me, and you will go to heaven in a trice.”

“ With all my heart,” said the drover, and opened the bag, when out sprang Little Claus in a moment.

“ But will you take care of my cattle ? ” said the old man, creeping into the bag, which Little Claus had no sooner closed, than he went his ways with all the cows and bullocks.

Soon after, Big Claus went out of the church, and slung his bag over his shoulder, though it seemed to him as if it had become somewhat lighter ; for the old drover was not half so heavy as Little Claus. “ How light he now seems ! ” quoth he. “ That comes of my having heard a psalm.” So he went towards the river, that was broad and deep, and flung the bag and the drover into the water, exclaiming, in the belief that it was Little Claus : “ There you may lie ! and



"The moment I fell upon it . . . the loveliest girl imaginable . . .
took me by the hand."

now you won't be able to play me any more tricks."

Thereupon, he began to walk home ; but, on coming to a cross-way, who should he meet but Little Claus, who was driving along his cattle.

"How's this?" said Big Claus. "Didn't I drown you?"

"Yes," said Little Claus ; "you threw me into the river, some half-hour ago."

"But where did you get all this fine cattle?" asked Big Claus.

"It is sea-cattle," said Little Claus. "I'll tell you the whole story, and thank you into the bargain for having drowned me ; for, since I have escaped, I shall be very wealthy. I was much frightened while I was still in the bag, and the wind whistled through my ears as you flung me down from the bridge into the cold waters. I sank immediately to the bottom ; but I did not hurt myself, for the softest and most beautiful grass grows below. The moment I fell upon it, the bag was opened, and the loveliest girl imaginable, dressed in snow-white robes, and wearing a green wreath on her wet hair, took me by the hand, saying : 'Is that you, Little Claus? First of all there's some cattle for you. A mile further down the road, there is another herd that I will make you a present of.' I now perceived that the river is a great high-road for the sea-folks. They were walking and driving below, from the sea far away



" ' There's no fear about that,' said little Claus ; still he put a large stone into the bag."

into the land, to the spot where the river ceases. And it was so beautiful, and there were such a quantity of flowers, and the grass looked so fresh ! The fishes that were swimming in the water shot past my ears, just as the birds do here in the air. And what handsome people there were ! and what splendid cattle were grazing on the dykes and ditches ! ”

“ But why have you returned hither so soon ! ” asked Big Claus. “ I should not have done so, since it is so beautiful below.”

“ Why,” said Little Claus, “ it is a piece of policy on my part. You heard me say, just now, that the sea-nymph told me, that a mile further down the road—and by road she meant the river, for she can’t journey any other way—there was another large herd of cattle for me. But I, who know the river’s many windings, thought it rather a roundabout way ; so I preferred making a short cut, by coming up to land, and crossing right over the fields back to the river ; by doing which, I shall save almost half a mile, and shall reach my sea-cattle all the sooner.”

“ Oh, what a lucky man you are ! ” exclaimed Big Claus. “ Do you think that I, too, should obtain some sea-cattle, if I went down to the bottom of the river.”

“ No doubt you would,” said Little Claus ; “ only I can’t carry you in a bag to the river, for you are too heavy ; but if you like to go there, and

then creep into the bag, I would throw you in with all the pleasure in the world."

"Thank you!" said Big Claus. "But if I don't get any sea-cattle by going down, I'll beat you famously when I return."

"No—now, don't be so hard upon me," said Little Claus. And then they went to the river. The cattle, being very thirsty, no sooner saw the water, than they ran down to drink.

"Look what a hurry they are in!" said Little Claus. "They are longing to be below again."

"Now, make haste and help me," said Big Claus, "or else you shall be beaten." And he crept into the large bag, that had been lying across the back of one of the bullocks. "Put in a stone, for fear I should not sink," said Big Claus.

"There's no fear about that," said Little Claus; still, he put a large stone into the bag, and then gave it a push.

Plump! into the river fell Big Claus, and immediately sank to the bottom.

"I am afraid he won't find the cattle," said Little Claus; and away he drove his own beasts home.

The Tinder-Box



HERE came a soldier marching along on the high road. Left! Right! Left! Right! He had his knapsack on his back, and his sword at his side, for he had been to war, and was returning home.

On his way, he happened to meet a very repulsive-looking old witch, whose under-lip hung down to her chin. She said: "Good-evening, soldier — what a handsome sword, and what a large knap-sack you have got! You

are a very proper sort of soldier ! And you shall have as much money as ever you like."

"Thank you, you old witch," said the soldier.

"You see that large tree?" said the witch, pointing to a tree near at hand. "Well! it is quite hollow inside. You must climb to the top, and then you will see a hole, through which you must let yourself down quite deep into the tree. I will tie a rope round your body, that I may be able to draw you up again when you call out."

"But what am I to do down in the tree?" asked the soldier.

"Get money," said the witch, "for know, that the moment you have reached the bottom of the tree, you will find yourself in a large hall, brilliantly lighted with innumerable lamps. You will then perceive three doors. These are quite easy to open, for in each lock there is a key. As you enter the first chamber, you will see a large chest in the middle of the floor, and on the chest will be sitting a dog with a pair of eyes as big as teacups. But you need not mind him. I will give you my checked apron to spread on the floor; then go right to the dog, seize hold of him, and place him on my apron, open the chest and take as many pennies as you please. They are copper ones. If you prefer silver, you need only go into the next chamber. Only there sits a dog with eyes as big as mill-wheels. But never mind him. Place him on my apron, and take some money. If, however, you

want gold, you can take as much as you can carry away, by going into the third chamber. Only the dog that sits on the money-chest in that room, has eyes as big as a tower. Believe me he is a bad dog! Yet you need not mind. If you set him on my apron, he won't hurt you, and then take as much gold as you like out of the chest."

"This is no bad job!" said the soldier; "but what shall I give you, you old witch; for, of course, you don't oblige me for nothing?"

"Yet not a single penny of it do I require," said the witch. "The only thing I ask you to bring me is an old tinder-box, which my grandmother forgot last time she went down there."

"Well, then, tie the rope round me," said the soldier.

"Here it is," said the witch, "and here is my checked apron."

The soldier then climbed up the tree, slid down through the aperture, and then found himself as the witch had told him he would, in a large hall below, where many hundreds of lamps were burning.

He now opened the first door—oh, dear!—there stood the dog staring at him with eyes as big as teacups.

"You are a nice fellow!" said the soldier, setting him on the witch's apron; and then he took as many pennies as his pockets could hold; and shutting down the lid, he replaced the dog



"And he set the dog on the witch's apron."

upon it, and went into the other room. And, sure enough, there sat the dog with eyes as big as mill-wheels.

"You had better not stare at me so," said the soldier, "or you will have tears in your eyes!" And he then set the dog on the witch's apron. But then he saw what a load of silver there was in the chest, he flung away all the copper he had taken, and filled his pockets and knapsack with nothing but silver. Then he went into the third chamber. Now, that was really hideous! The dog had, positively, a pair of eyes as large as two towers, that kept turning about like wheels.

"Good-evening," said the soldier, touching his cap, for he had never seen such a dog before. On a closer inspection, however, he thought he had made enough ado, and therefore lifted him on to the floor, and opened the chest.

Bless us! what a deal of gold was there to be seen! Enough to buy up the whole town, and all the sugar-pigs of all the stall-women, all the lead soldiers, whips, and rocking-horses in the whole world! It was, indeed, a huge sight of gold! The soldier now flung away all the silver with which he had encumbered his pockets and his knapsack, and exchange it for gold; and he crammed not only all his pockets and his knapsack, but even his cap and his boots so full that he could hardly walk.

"Now draw me up, you old witch!" said he.

"Have you got the tinder-box?" asked the witch.

"Zounds!" said the soldier, "I clean forgot it!" And he went back and fetched it. The witch then drew him up, and he found himself once more on the highway, with his pockets, boots, knapsack, and cap, filled with gold.

"What are you going to do with the tinder-box?" asked the soldier.

"That's nothing to you," said the witch. "You have got plenty of money—now give me the tinder-box."

"Do you know what?" said the soldier. "You must either tell me at once what you mean to do with it, or I'll draw my sword and cut your head off!"

"I won't," said the witch.

The soldier immediately struck her head off—and there she lay! Then he tied up all his money in her apron, and slung it at his back like a bundle, put the tinder-box into his pocket, and walked towards the town.

A very pretty town it was! He turned into the nicest inn he could find, asked for the best room, and ordered his favourite dishes for dinner; for now he was rich, having so much money in his possession.

The servant who cleaned his boots did, to be sure, think them wonderfully shabby boots for such a wealthy gentleman; for he had not yet

purchased new ones. On the following day, however, he procured proper boots and handsome clothes. From a mere common soldier he had now become a grand gentleman ; and the people told him of all the fine things to be seen in their city, and what a handsome princess the king's daughter was.

"Where can she be seen ?" asked the soldier.

"She is not to be seen at all," said they. "She lives in a large copper castle, flanked with towers, and surrounded by walls. Nobody but the king is allowed to go in or out ; for it has been foretold that she will marry a common soldier, and the king can't endure such an idea."

"I should like to see her, however," said the soldier. But he could not by any means obtain leave to do so.

He now led a very pleasant life. He visited the theatres, drove in the king's park, and gave abundant alms to the poor ; and that was good of him, because he remembered, by his early days, how sad it is not to possess a penny in the world. He was now rich, and had fine clothes, and plenty of friends, who all declared that he was an excellent fellow, and a real gentleman ; and the soldier was nothing loth to hear this said. As, however, he kept daily giving away money, and never receiving any, he at last had nothing but two pennies left, and he was obliged to give up the elegant rooms he had inhabited, and to take a little

garret, where he had to clean his own boots, and even to mend them with a darning-needle. None of his friends came to see him now there were so many stairs to go up.

One dark evening, he had not enough money to buy a light ; but he happened to recollect that there was a candle-end in the tinder-box which he had fetched out of the tree, into which the witch had helped him to slide down. So he looked for the tinder-box and the candle-end ; but no sooner had he struck a few sparks from the flint, than the door flew open, and the dog, whose eyes were as big as teacups, whom he had seen down in the tree, stood before him, saying : " What orders, master ? "

" How is this ? " asked the soldier. " Well, it's a pleasant tinder-box indeed, if it can give me all I wish for. Bring me some money ! " added he to the dog.

And away went the dog ; and back he came, in a trice, carrying a large bag of copper in his mouth.

The soldier now knew the value of the tinder-box he had in his possession. If he struck the flint once, there appeared the dog that sat on the lid of the copper coins ; if he struck it twice there came the dog belonging to the chest of silver ; and if he struck it three times, it brought the dog that watched over the gold. The soldier now returned to the handsome rooms below.

and appeared once more in fine clothes. His friends then recognized him immediately, and made a great fuss about him.

He once thought: "It is very strange that one cannot manage to get a sight of this princess. People say she is so very beautiful, but that's



"She lay asleep on the dog's back, and was so lovely that everybody might see she was a real princess."

not of much use to her if she is obliged to remain shut up in a large copper castle, flanked by turrets. Can't I somehow get a look at her? Where's my tinder-box?" And he struck a light, when lo! there came the dog with eyes as big as teacups.

"Though it is in the middle of the night," said the soldier, "yet I have a great mind to see the princess, if it were only for a moment."

The dog was gone in a jiffy, and before the soldier could look round, had returned with the princess. She lay asleep on the dog's back, and was so lovely that everybody might see she was a real princess. The soldier could not help kissing her, like a true soldier that he was.

The dog then ran back with the princess. But next morning, when the king and queen were drinking tea, the princess related what an odd dream she had had in the night about a dog and a soldier. She had ridden upon the dog, and been kissed by the soldier.

"Really, this is a pretty story," said the queen.

An elderly lady-in-waiting was set to watch that night by the princess's bed, in order to see whether it had been a real dream, or whether there might be any truth in it.

The soldier longed excessively to see the princess once more ; so the dog was sent again in the night to fetch her, and ran away as fast as he could. But the old lady-in-waiting put on snow-boots, and ran after him at almost as quick a pace. When she saw that they went into a large house, she thought she should know how to find it again by making a huge cross on the door with a piece of chalk. She then went home, and lay down, and presently the dog returned with the princess ; but when he saw the cross on the door of the house where the soldier lived, he took a piece of chalk, and marked every door in the town with a cross,

so that the lady-in-waiting should not be able to find the right one.

Early next morning, the king and queen, and the old lady-in-waiting, and all the officers of the household, came to see where the princess had been.

"It must be here," said the king, on perceiving the first door that was marked with a cross.

"No, there, my dear husband, said the queen, seeing the second door similarly marked.

"But there's one, and there's another," said all present; for whichever way they looked, there were crosses on all the doors. They were then convinced that it was no use seeking any further.

But the queen was a clever woman, who knew something beyond merely riding out in a coach. She took up her large gold scissors, and cut out a piece of silk into small bits, and made a pretty little bag; having filled it with buck-wheat flour, she fastened it to the princess's back, and then cut a small hole in the bag, so that the flour should strew the whole way the princess went.

During the night, the dog came again, and took the princess on his back, and ran with her to the soldier, who had grown so fond of her, that he wished to be a prince, that he might marry her.

The dog did not remark that the flour had bestrewed the way from the castle to the soldier's

very window, as he ran up to the wall with the princess. In the morning, the king and queen found out where their daughter had been, and they had the soldier taken and put into prison.

And there he sat, and dark and dull enough it was! Besides, they said to him: "You shall be hanged to-morrow!" which was not a very pleasant prospect, especially as he had left his tinder-box at the inn. Next morning, he could see, through the gratings of his little window, the crowds that were hastening out of town to see him hung. He heard the drums beating, and saw the soldiers marching. Everybody ran out to look at them, amongst the rest a shoemaker's apprentice, in his leather apron and slippers. He sped away at such a rate, that one of his slippers flew off, and hit the wall just where the soldier sat looking through the iron grating.

"I say, you shoemaker's 'prentice, you needn't be in such a hurry," said the soldier. "The execution can't take place till I am there. But if you have a mind to run and fetch me my tinder-box, you shall have four shillings; only you must go as fast as your legs will carry you." The shoemaker's apprentice liked the notion of earning four shillings, so away he ran, and fetched the tinder-box, and handed it over to the soldier. But we shall see what came to pass.

Outside the town stood a large gibbet, surrounded by walls. Around these stood the



"I say, you shoemaker's 'prentice, you needn't be in such a hurry,
said the soldier."

soldiers, and several thousands of human beings. The king and queen sat on a magnificent throne opposite the judges and the whole council.

The soldier stood already on the ladder ; but, just as the rope was being put round his neck, he observed that a poor sinner was always granted any innocent wish he might express before he suffered death. Now, he wished to smoke a pipe, as it would be the last pipe he could enjoy in this world.

The king could not refuse his request ; so the soldier took out his tinder-box, and struck the flint once—twice—and thrice ! And there came all the dogs : the one with eyes as big as teacups, the one with eyes like mill-wheels, and the one whose eyes were as large as the towers.

“ Help me, so that I may not be hung ! ” said the soldier.

And the dogs fell upon the judges and the whole council, seized some by the legs, and the others by the nose, and flung them several feet high into the air, so that when they fell down again they were shattered to pieces.

“ I order you not,” said the king ; but the largest dog seized him, as well as the queen, and tossed them up like the others. The soldiers were then frightened, and the whole population cried out : “ Good soldier, you shall be our king, and marry the beautiful princess.”

They then placed the soldier in the king's

carriage, and the three dogs ran before, crying :
“ Hurrah ! ” And the little boys played the fife
on their fingers, and the soldiers presented arms.
The princess left the copper castle, and became a
queen, all of which she liked vastly. The
wedding entertainment lasted eight days, and
the dogs sat at table, and stared with all their
might.

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